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The works of Honore de Balzac /



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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

SERAPHITA

WITH

JESUS CHRIST IN FLANDERS

AND

THE EXILES



Edw. Girardet

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*“ She drew the flower from her bosom and showed it
to them.”*

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THE WORKS
OF
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY
KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

VOLUME XIX

SERAPHITA
JESUS CHRIST IN FLANDERS
THE EXILES
MEMOIR

Illustrated
BY JULES GIRARDET AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
BOSTON

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TO
MADAME ÉVELINE DE HANSKA,

NÉE COMTESSE RZEWUSKA.

MADAME, — Here is the work which you asked of me. I am happy, in thus dedicating it, to offer you a proof of the respectful affection you allow me to bear you. If I am reproached for impotence in this attempt to draw from the depths of mysticism a book which seeks to give, in the lucid transparency of our beautiful language, the luminous poesy of the Orient, to you the blame! Did you not command this struggle (resembling that of Jacob) by telling me that the most imperfect sketch of this Figure, dreamed of by you, as it has been by me since childhood, would still be something to you?

Here, then, it is, — that something. Would that this book could belong exclusively to noble spirits, preserved like yours from worldly pettiness by solitude! *They* would know how to give to it the melodious rhythm that it lacks, which might have made it, in the hands of a poet, the glorious epic that France still awaits. But from me they must accept it as one of those sculptured balustrades, carved by a hand of faith, on which the pilgrims lean, in the choir of some glorious church, to think upon the end of man.

I am, madame, with respect,

Your devoted servant,

DE BALZAC.

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*Designed by Jules Girardet, and reproduced in photogravure by
Goupil & Co., Paris.*

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INTRODUCTION.

It is highly probable that "Seraphita" cost its author more than any other of his intellectual offspring. The evidence of this appears in his correspondence. Writing to Madame Zulma Carraud in January, 1834, he says, "Seraphita is a work more severe than any other upon the writer." What he thought of it may be gathered from another passage in the same letter, in which he speaks of it as "a work as much beyond 'Louis Lambert' as 'Louis Lambert' is beyond 'Gaudissart.'" As he proceeded with it his labor became more intense. In March, 1835, writing to the Duchesse de Castries, he says: "The toil upon this work has been crushing and terrible. I have passed, and must still pass, days and nights upon it. I compose, decompose, and recompose it." He did not delude himself as to the kind of reception it was likely to encounter: "In a few days," he observes, "all will have been said. Either I shall have won fame or the Parisians will have failed to understand me. And inasmuch as, with them, mockery commonly takes the place of understanding, I can hope only for a remote and tardy success. Eventually appreciation will come, and at once here and there. For the

rest, I think this book will be a favorite with those souls that like to lose themselves in the spaces of infinity."

There is a legend to the effect that Balzac first conceived the idea embodied in "Seraphita" while contemplating a beautiful sculptured figure of an angel in the studio of a friend. It is possible that he himself may have made this statement, for he was fond of picturesque and dramatic incidents, and might easily have ascribed to a trivial occurrence a significance greater than it was entitled to. The true genesis of this, perhaps the most remarkable and unquestionably the most elevated work of fiction ever written, is fortunately not doubtful, for the proofs are in the book itself. "Seraphita" is the natural crowning flower of that philosophic exposition begun in the "Peau de Chagrin," and developed so much more fully in "Louis Lambert." The latter work moreover may be said both to have adumbrated and necessitated "Seraphita;" and it is proper to state here that whoever wishes to grasp the full meaning of this book must first read "Louis Lambert," which introduces and to a considerable extent explains the present work. The profound system embodied in the oracular fragments which fell from the lips of the rapt young sage, and were taken down and preserved by the faithful and clear-sighted Pauline contains the interpretation of the marvellous being Balzac's genius has set in that most harmonious and appropriate frame of the Northern skies and snow-covered plains, frozen fiords and black, ice-clad mountains. Indeed there is nothing more striking in this masterpiece than the beauty and ex-

quisite taste of its setting. Theophile Gautier without exaggeration styles it "one of the most astonishing productions of modern literature;" and proceeds: "Never did Balzac approach, in fact almost seize, the very Ideal of Beauty as in this book: the ascent of the mountain has in it something ethereal, supernatural, luminous, which lifts one above the earth. The only colors employed are the blue of heaven and the pure white of the snow, with some pearly tints for the shadows. We know nothing more ravishing than this opening."

It is all true. Nowhere have Balzac's artistic delicacy and spiritual subtlety been so victoriously employed as in the conception and execution of "Sera-phita." There is no change in it from lower to higher regions. The author launches himself like an eagle from a cliff, high upon the bosom of the loftier atmosphere, and his powerful wings sustain him to the end at an elevation which enables the reader to separate himself with facility from the existence of vulgar commonplace, if it does not help him to respire easily in air so rarefied as to be scarcely adequate to the expansion of gross and fleshly lungs. To Balzac himself, whose versatility and sympathetic range were almost as broad and deep as those of Nature, this final flight of his philosophical and theosophical exposition was painful and laborious. Like Nature he could compass all forms of existence, but, like Nature too, he was most at home in the free working of tangible matter. In the "Comédie Humaine" he had however undertaken to picture

and to analyze life as it existed in his period, and to him this meant all life, from the lowest to the highest. Shakspeare is the only other writer who shows the same marvellous breadth of scope ; to whom every state and condition of humanity is sympathetic ; who sees into and apprehends every form of existence ; who can put himself in the place equally of the outcast and the saint, — the soul black with sin and shame, and the soul white with good deeds and noble aspirations. These two, Balzac and Shakspeare, have in common the qualities which most emphatically denote the highest form of genius. Among those qualities the precious endowment of Intuition ranks perhaps the highest. It is this mysterious and magical gift which explains the influence upon the human mind of the few great souls — Specialists, as Louis Lambert styles them — that have appeared at long intervals through the ages and have left their mark upon generations and centuries.

Louis Lambert declares that Jesus Christ was a Specialist, and the interpretation of this is that he possessed the power of striking that chord which vibrates in all hearts, of embodying in words those thoughts whose expression appeals to the largest audience and awakes the deepest and purest emotions. The great Mother of us all, from whom we proceed, in whose bosom we must lie, has the same characteristics, the same fecundity, elasticity, comprehensiveness, and sympathy. Jesus, indeed, came at a time when there was little laughter in the world. Life was very stern and grim when Rome was the mistress of the known habitable globe. It could

hardly have been deemed worth living if measured by modern gauges. As in the time of Gautama Buddha, five centuries before, the central problem was the wretchedness of existence. We who, surrounded by the comforts and luxuries of the nineteenth century, stand perplexed at the dark and gloomy views which those old races seem to have held in so matter-of-course a way, fail sufficiently to realize the actual pressure of misery upon the great majority of human beings at those periods. In sad truth, life was to them a painful puzzle. They were not, like us, chiefly occupied in determining how best to employ it and derive from it the greatest happiness or usefulness. Most of them were born into conditions escape from which was hopeless and continuance in which was intolerable. They were helpless and they suffered. What wonder if they looked bewildered to the unanswering sky, questioned the dumb face of Nature, and lost themselves in sombre speculations as to the why and wherefore of their existence, and the causes of the seemingly purposeless chain of being. To them deliverance from incarnation was the first requisite of a rational gospel; and this deliverance was offered, though in different ways, by the two great Teachers whose wisdom and promises have been respectively the Light of Asia and of Christendom.

To understand "Seraphita" it is necessary to take a somewhat wide preliminary survey. We must begin by fixing in our minds the scheme of evolution which it is intended to illustrate and to carry to its farthest mundane development, while projecting the vision even

beyond this point, and foreshadowing the outlines of a higher and an incorporeal state of existence. Human destiny, according to this theory, is a painful course of elevation and emancipation; a working out of what we call Matter into what we call Spirit, — but which really is merely different conditions of one primal substance. There are three worlds: the Material, the Spiritual, and the Divine. These three worlds must be traversed in turn by the souls of men, which in these journeyings must pass through three stages, namely the Instinctive, the Abstractive, and the Specialist. Now the soul is guided on its way and raised gradually by the influence of Love. First, Self-Love stimulates and urges it onward and upward until the clogging stagnation of Savagery is escaped, and progress toward Barbarism and thence to what is now termed Civilization, is secured. Second, the love of others, Altruism, supersedes Self-Love in the most advanced men and women, and then the time is ripe for the establishment of those great religions which in their infancy, when the central doctrine is pure and fresh and full of magnetism, sways peoples and countries so powerfully, and changes the direction of the age. It is Altruism which has produced all the highest and noblest works the human race possesses to-day. It is that which is at the root of Duty, Honor, Faithfulness, Loyalty, Self-Sacrifice. It did not indeed have to be invented anew for modern humanity as the lost arts in many cases have been, for Altruism was never dead. But for long ages it was overlooked by man, for its hiding-place was then in the breast of

Woman, whose tender heart served as the Shechinah — the Sanctuary of exiled Unselfish Love.

Woman practised the long-forgotten virtue while suffering in silence the tyranny to which her constitutional weakness condemned her. From the beginning she has been the chief conservator of this indispensable aid to the higher life. If she has not succeeded in manifesting so strikingly as advanced men the serviceableness of Altruism to material progress, it is because the repression from which she suffered through so protracted a period stunted her intellectual growth, and thus rendered her deficient in the capacity to apply practically what she cultivated almost instinctively. On the other hand, her aptitude was greater in the direction of the Divine. There her facility in renunciation assisted her greatly. Her experience in sorrow and self-sacrifice through daily life, her culture in the philosophy of patient endurance, her habit of expending herself upon others, all fitted her in an especial way for ascent towards those lofty heights of emotion, aspiration, and ecstasy, which are as a rule known only by name to men. It is by the Love of God — the Divine Love — that the soul must be guided and supported in its passage through the third sphere, which is called the Divine World; and to this cult the woman-nature addresses itself with less reluctance and repugnance than the masculine spirit, so deeply attached to material interests, so unaccustomed to what seem the cold abstractions of divinity. As the Abstractive condition prevails more and more it carries with it a scepticism

which to the timid spectator appears to threaten Religion with total extinction; and as the tide of materialism flows ever deeper and wider the cult of the Supreme, of the Unmanifest, of the Spiritual generally, is maintained by women almost single-handed. The French Revolution might have banished Faith from the soil of France had not the women refused to abandon their altars. Even to-day, in the same country, the spiritual elements of its civilization are being supplied mainly by the same humble believers in the Over-Soul. As to the men, materialism has smothered their higher feelings, and caused them for the time to imagine that they are or can be content with a world from which spirituality is excluded.

The function of the Specialist, following Balzac's theosophy, is to stimulate and develop the higher culture while working out his own enfranchisement. When the world has proceeded so far upon the path of purely material evolution as to threaten a fatally one-sided outcome, one of these advanced souls is incarnated and lifts the divine standard anew. The very fact of the close commixture between Spirit and Matter renders it impossible that the inclination and tendency toward the loftier mysteries of life should ever be wholly lost, and when the wave of materialism seems at its height the reaction is nearest and the spirit of the age is best prepared for fresh impregnation by the Logos. No more poetical or striking picture of one of these spiritual transmutations can be found than that which the late Matthew Arnold embodied in "Obermann once

More." This was the world of "some two thousand years" since :

- " Like ours it looked in outward air,
Its head was clear and true,
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,
No pause its action knew ;
- " Stout was its arm, each thew and bone
Seemed puissant and alive,
But, ah! its heart, its heart was stone,
And so it could not thrive !
- " On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell ;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.
- " In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay ;
He drove abroad, in furious guise,
Along the Appian way.
- " He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crowned his hair with flowers ;
No easier nor no quicker passed
The impracticable hours.
- " The brooding East with awe beheld
Her impious younger world ;
The Roman tempest swelled and swelled,
And on her head was hurled.
- " The East bowed low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain ;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

- “ So well she mused, a morning broke
 Across her spirit gray;
 A conquering, new-born joy awoke
 And filled her life with day.
- “ ‘ Poor world,’ she cried, ‘ so deep accurst,
 That runn’st from pole to pole
 To seek a draught to slake thy thirst, —
 Go, seek it in thy soul !’
- “ She heard it, the victorious West,
 In crown and sword arrayed,
 She felt the void which mined her breast,
 She shivered and obeyed.
- “ She veiled her eagles, snapped her sword,
 And laid her sceptre down;
 Her stately purple she abhorred,
 And her imperial crown.

- “ Lust of the eye and pride of life
 She left it all behind,
 And hurried, torn with inward strife,
 The wilderness to find.
- “ Tears washed the trouble from her face!
 She changed into a child!
 ‘ Mid weeds and wrecks she stood, — a place
 Of ruin, — but she smiled !’

The poet intimates that the influences brought by Christianity are now exhausted, that they have ceased to operate because faith is dead. Yet he is not without hope for the future. Human expectation, raised in modern times to great heights by the promise of the

French Revolution, has indeed been sadly disappointed. Nevertheless,

“ The world’s great order dawns in sheen
After long darkness rude,
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,
With happier zeal pursued.”

Despite all premature confidence and too sanguine anticipation, there is warrant for the inspiration which leads men to labor for the attainment of

“ One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again ! ”

When the Hour arrives the Man will appear. That is the teaching of history and that is the doctrine of the sages. The darkest moments are those which precede the dawn, and it is at what seems the very point of desperation that relief is given. There is indeed nothing occult in this view. It is founded upon observation and experience. The mystery lies in the causes of these opportune and portentous events ; in the evolution of the Avatars who in turn appear to change a world’s course and to rekindle the pure flame of Religion and Spirituality. Balzac, however, has not encumbered his subtle and profound study, as an inferior artist would have been apt to do, by showing the Specialist in the discharge of his function of Deliverer. His purpose was to exhibit and analyze, as far as possible, that rare and precious form of existence in which the progress of the spirit toward the Divine has been carried so far as to render continued toleration of earthly

life impossible. Seraphita is the Specialist upon whom no world-mission has been laid ; a final efflorescence of long-cultivated spirituality ; the last, most delicate and fragile link between Mortality and Immortality. In the androgynous symbolism under which Seraphita is presented, the author has embodied an archaic and profound doctrine. The male and female qualities and characteristics are so manifestly complementary that human thought at a comparatively early stage arrived at the idea of the original union of the sexes in one relatively perfect and self-sufficient being. In the Divine World, according to Swedenborg, such a union consummates the attachment of those souls which during their corporeal life have been in complete sympathy. The Angel of Love and the Angel of Wisdom combine to form a single being which possesses both their qualities.

To the theory of spiritual evolution taught by Swedenborg the doctrine of metempsychosis, or as it is more commonly termed at present, the doctrine of re-incarnation, is necessary. This doctrine may be traced to a remote antiquity, and while it is still comparatively unfamiliar to the Western world, it has for ages been at the very foundation of all Eastern religion and philosophy. The Rev. William R. Alger, in his "Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," observes upon this subject: "No other doctrine has exerted so extensive, controlling, and permanent an influence upon mankind as that of the metempsychosis,—the notion that when the soul leaves the body it is born anew in another body, its rank, character, circum-

stances, and experience in each successive existence depending on its qualities, deeds, and attainments in its preceding lives. Such a theory, well matured, bore unresisted sway through the great Eastern world long before Moses slept in his little ark of bulrushes on the shore of the Egyptian river; Alexander the Great gazed with amazement on the self-immolation by fire to which it inspired the Gymnosophists; Cæsar found its tenets propagated among the Gauls beyond the Rubicon; and at this hour it reigns despotic, as the learned and travelled Professor of Sanscrit at Oxford tells us, ‘without any sign of decrepitude or decay, over the Burman, Chinese, Tartar, Tibetan, and Indian nations, including at least six hundred and fifty millions of mankind.’ There is abundant evidence to prove that this scheme of thought prevailed at a very early period among the Egyptians, all classes and sects of the Hindus, the Persian disciples of the Magi, and the Druids, and, in a later age, among the Greeks and Romans as represented by Musæus, Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Macrobius, Ovid, and many others. It was generally adopted by the Jews from the time of the Babylonian captivity. Traces of it have been discovered among the ancient Scythians, the African tribes, some of the Pacific Islanders, and various aboriginal nations both of North and of South America.”

In fact there is scarcely a division of the human family, advanced at all beyond the stage of savagery, in which either the germs of this theory or the fully developed belief may not be discovered. The form in

which it has been held differs. Thus the Platonists and Pythagoreans supposed that human souls might inhabit the bodies of animals, birds, etc. The Manicheans went further, and taught that such spirits might be reborn in vegetable forms; and some have even imagined that sin and degradation could condemn human souls to imprisonment in rocks, stones, or the dust of the field. The Talmudists, the teachers of Oriental esotericism, and generally speaking the older and more authoritative exponents of the wisdom-religion, maintained that human souls transmigrated through human bodies alone, rising, step by step, to higher planes. A very convenient collection of opinions upon re-incarnation has lately been published by Mr. E. D. Walker, and this work may be commended to those who desire to realize something of the extent to which the doctrine has been held both in the past and the present. By abundant quotations Mr. Walker shows, not only that it was a cardinal tenet of the so-called Pagan religions, but that many of the early Christians — notably Origen — maintained it; while the array of modern philosophers, poets, men of science, and theologians who have even in recent times received it is well calculated to give pause to reflective minds. Such names as Kant, Schelling, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, Bruno, Herder, Lessing, Goethe, Boehme, Fichte, and others, are found in the list, and even the sceptical Hume, in his essay on the Immortality of the Soul, observes: “The metempsychosis is therefore the only system of this kind that philosophy can hearken to.”

Schopenhauer declares that "the belief in metempsychosis presents itself as the natural conviction of man, whenever he reflects at all in an unprejudiced manner. It would really be that which Kant falsely asserts of his three pretended Ideas of the reason, a philosopheme natural to human reason, which proceeds from its forms; and when it is not found it must have been displaced by positive religious doctrines coming from a different source. I have also remarked that it is at once obvious to every one who hears of it for the first time." The same writer observes further: "In Christianity, however, the doctrine of original sin, that is, the doctrine of punishment for the sins of another individual, has taken the place of the transmigration of souls and the expiation in this way of all the sins committed in an earlier life. Both identify, and that with a moral tendency, the existing man with one who has existed before; the transmigration of souls does so directly, original sin indirectly." This venerable doctrine, proceeding in an unbroken line from the pre-Vedic period to the present time, and held even now by the larger moiety of the earth's inhabitants, is, as Schopenhauer remarks, a natural belief; for it is that which most rationally and plausibly accounts for the most perplexing mysteries of existence. As developed by the subtle Hindu intellect it is full of attraction and persuasion to unprejudiced minds, and when the so-called law of Karma is applied to it, the resulting scheme may well seem to embrace and explain the most formidable considerations and objections.

Schopenhauer, it is true, raises the objection that in the Buddhist (or Hindu) doctrine of metempsychosis the discontinuousness of memory between re-births practically renders the process palingenesis and not metempsychosis. The German philosopher, however, but imperfectly apprehended the doctrine which he adapted so closely; for his substitution of the "will to live" for "Karma" is really little more than a change of terminology, his theory of the functions of Will being at bottom a Germanization of the law of Karma. Had he lived to study the later developments of Asiatic philosophy and metaphysics, it cannot be doubted that so open and clear an intelligence would have recognized the force of those deeper implications which round out and give consistency and completeness to the Oriental scheme of thought, and dissipate the surface difficulties of the subject. The advances made recently in Western psychology have contributed to the growth of a better understanding on many points, and among the most suggestive and illuminating studies may be cited those of Ribot on disease of the memory, and on double and other abnormal conditions of personality. The persistence of memory was held to be indispensable to a true metempsychosis by Schopenhauer because he had no conception of the refinements of Hindu speculation, which postulate the deathless principle of man as a congeries of separable parts, to the perishable among which physical recollection belongs. The Hindu posits, however, an undying psychical memory, which is incognizable by the incarnate soul, but which, nevertheless,

stores up every event of the numerous transmigrations through which it passes, to bring the whole series into the consciousness of the persistent spirit when it has accomplished all its educational changes, and has attained an elevation which enables it fully to comprehend itself and its evolution.

Science, nay, common experience and observation, throw some light upon this difficult subject. The phenomena of normal sleep serve to show how the persistence of physical life is maintained notwithstanding periodical, frequent, and continuous lapses of consciousness. The rarer phenomena of double personality, so carefully studied by Charcot, Azam, Binet, Ribot, Liégeois, and others, emphasize the lessons of every-day experience in this direction. The remarkable cases in which, memory having been lost for considerable periods of time, it has been recovered as suddenly as it had disappeared, point out the lines of reasoning upon which the apparent change of personality may be reconciled with latent persistence and continuation of individuality. And indeed Schopenhauer might have perceived that the action of the Hindu law of Karma would be futile and purposeless if, as he concluded, each re-birth involved, to all practical intents, the creation of a new person. For to what end should the results of acts done in a former life follow and modify the succeeding incarnation if the two existences had no connection? Schopenhauer's misapprehension on this point was indeed far-reaching in its effect; for it led him to postulate a contradiction in terms,—an unconscious

Will-force, namely. Volition implies consciousness, and unconscious volition is unthinkable, a mere arrangement of words representing no comprehensible idea.

Swedenborg, with all his crudities and anthropomorphic fancies, was far more logical in his theory of metempsychosis, which is in fact in many particulars accordant with the Hindu doctrine. Re-incarnation, according to the Swedish Sage, is a process whereby the evolution of the higher faculties is made possible. In common with many of the most profound and lucid thinkers, he perceived the inadequacy of a single lifetime to the work of psychical evolution, and he adopted, or attained by independent or intuitional methods, the Oriental explanation of that lapse of consciousness which Tennyson refers to in the lines:—

“ Or, if through lower lives I came,
Though all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame,

“ I might forget my weaker lot ;
For is not our first year forgot ?
The haunts of memory echo not.

“ Some draught of Lethe doth await
As old mythologies relate,
The slipping through from state to state.”

As with the Hindus, he held that the break in memory which signaled the completion of a physical existence was itself a physical phenomenon ; but that the psychical processes of evolution went on unaffected by the changes

of death and re-birth, and that among these processes was the transmission, across the gap caused by death, of the qualities and tendencies and spiritual attainments belonging to the individual undergoing re-incarnation. In Oriental terminology Swedenborg's embryo Angels were the products of continued operation of good Karma. They represented the best results of human aspiration faithfully maintained until the upward yearning had destroyed the strong attachments to earth and qualified the spirit to breathe the rarefied atmosphere of the Divine World. In this evolutionary process, moreover, the highest examples of human development were reached, and in these a type was attained which exhibited the ideal of humanity as it was or as it might have been immediately after the descent of Spirit into Matter, and before that Fall which in the symbolism of the occultists signifies the victory of Materialism over Spirituality, the beginning of that long course of mundane and gross development which men call civilization, and which has blinded them, by its material gains, to the extent of the divergence of the race from its only permanent and worthy interests.

Seraphita was conceived by Balzac in a moment of supreme insight and inspiration, to embody Swedenborg's noblest ideas. Not that Swedenborg can be regarded as the originator of the theory which he expanded and modified and stamped with his own individuality and his own imperfectly developed spiritual perceptions. For it must be admitted by all candid students of the Seer that his supposed revelations are

often clogged and overlaid with the most palpable anthropomorphism; that he derives his notions of celestial phenomena and existences from his personal environment with a curious childish simplicity at times; that he exhibits in many ways his inadequacy as the vehicle of supra-mundane communications; and his inability, partly through physical, partly through intellectual conditions, to transmit with fidelity or even to observe with accuracy that which was presented to his internal vision. Indeed it may be said that whoever wishes to enjoy the beauties which undoubtedly subsist in his writings, must be prepared to submit them to a certain analytic and refining process. For they may be likened to the great world-religions, which, issuing clearly and nobly from their sources, have in time become discolored and polluted and changed sometimes into quite unsavory and ignoble streams by the operation upon them, during long periods, of all the grossness, perversity, materialism, selfishness, mendacity, and iniquity which men bring to the amelioration of their condition and the improvement of the creeds upon which they profess to rely for the security of their future well-being. Not to carry the parallel too far, it should be distinctly stated that Swedenborg assuredly infused no elements of evil into his representations and interpretations. He erred solely through temperament, and it may be surmised that the first period of his life, which was devoted to study in the physical sciences, strengthened in him that unconscious tendency to materialize spiritual things which is characteristic of his writings,

and which imparts to much of his description of the higher spheres so strange and infelicitous an atmosphere of earthly commonplace.

To penetrate to the heart of his subject it is therefore necessary to clear away a good deal of obstructive and non-essential matter. Had the Sage been a poet he would certainly have written more interestingly, and it may even be thought perhaps, more accurately, concerning many minor details. But the broad outlines, the firm framework of his system, remain entirely unaffected by his lack of imagination and grace of fancy; and it is upon the body of doctrine itself, and not upon the narrative powers of the Seer, that his reputation and the vitality of his teaching must rest. Here there is no defect of nobility, no sign of narrowness, no subservience to inherited beliefs, no undue elevation of symbolic or ceremonial hypotheses. From the voluminous theological library given out by him during his life and added to by posthumous publications, may be obtained a perfectly harmonious, essentially lofty, and intellectually attractive religious scheme and cosmological theory, though the latter is less easily cleared from its impediments than the former. It would not be possible, even were it desirable, to indicate more than the outlines of this system here. Balzac himself has presented all that he thought necessary to the comprehension of "Seraphita," in the following pages, and it is the purpose of this introduction principally to supply explanations which he omitted, perhaps because, coming fresh from mystical and occult studies which had

filled his mind to saturation, he took too much for granted the intellectual preparation of his readers.

One interesting consideration related to the peculiarities of Swedenborg's writings remains to be pointed out, and it has a wide bearing. All who are sufficiently interested in spiritual things to have examined what may be called the literature of revelation, have probably been perplexed and possibly discouraged, by the innumerable contradictions and discrepancies which are apparent in this branch of mysticism. Relations purporting to embody truthful presentations of the unseen universe, and believed by the Seers to be faithful records of true visions, offer, when compared, apparently hopeless and inexplicable divergencies. One consequence of this striking lack of harmony and consistency has naturally been to reinforce scepticism, and to give ground for the facile explanation of all such representations upon the theory of hallucination or disordered imagination. Such as are content with that explanation cannot be expected to make any farther inquiry into the subject; and this is the case with the majority, who regard with concealed or open dissatisfaction any hypothesis which by broadening the area of existence threatens to increase its responsibilities and extend its obligations. On the other hand, there will always be a considerable minority the character of whose minds leads them to explore the unknown, and the dominant influence of whose spiritual elements compels them to accept the possibility of a higher life beyond the grave, and under conditions difficult alike of

conception and comprehension. These inquirers are aware that according to analogy the problem referred to is not incapable of solution. Even in purely material life, for example, observation is invariably colored and modified by the personality of the observer. Every court of justice is a perpetual reminder of this. Human evidence concerning the most ordinary matters differs radically according to the character of the witnesses. Six men seeing the same thing will each give a different account of it, and they will rarely be found in agreement even as to essentials. Put six men into new and strange conditions, let them witness something the like of which none of them has ever seen before, and which is in itself seemingly opposed to all their experience, and we must expect still more divergent and irreconcilable reports. In such a case the evidence would be practically of no use in forming a conclusion.

In the researches by which men have sought to obtain knowledge of the supra-mundane the inherent difficulties must necessarily be very much greater. Supposing, for the purpose of the argument, that it is possible for certain peculiarly spiritual persons, by mental and physical discipline and preparation, or by natural aptitude, to penetrate behind the veil of Matter and obtain glimpses into the region of Spirit, it is nevertheless not credible that such persons should, while in the body, be capable either of clearly seeing or correctly repeating what they have seen. For however their spiritual perception may have been strengthened and clarified, it is obvious that its vehicle is ill adapted to the work of observation in so

foreign and unfamiliar a sphere. Between embodied and disembodied Spirit there is a great gulf fixed. Ultimately all Spirit may be identical in substance, but Spirit mixed with the grosser arrangements of Matter which constitute material life and phenomena has not, and cannot be made capable of, perfect insight to a higher state of existence, or a radically different state.

That this is the case the history of all mystical visions appears to indicate. It is not that the various Seers are hallucinated, or that they invent; it is that the divergences in their reports represent the insuperable influence of their material elements upon their spiritual perception. This may be tested by harmonies as well as by discords, indeed. The student of such subjects knows that remarkable resemblances in outline occur frequently among the mystical writings of widely separated races and ages. These resemblances cannot, in many instances, be accounted for on the theory of simple borrowing, for the proof is frequently attainable that borrowing would have been impossible. It would rather seem that these coincidences point to and emphasize the limitations of human research in this direction. It might be thought that many aspiring minds in many countries and at various times had obtained a certain dim insight to these obscure phenomena, — had grasped, so to speak, some salient points and broad general outlines; but that this imperfect perception had marked the utmost verge of their discovery, and that in every case the attempt to give exact form and body to the vision had been baffled and defeated by the

intrusion of those material elements which are inseparable from existence under the conditions with which alone we are acquainted at present. Thus we find that every so-called supernatural vision reflects, in greater or less degree, the educational equipment of the Seer, his habitat, his racial peculiarities, his every-day environment, and, almost invariably, the leading tenets of the religion he knows best, or which he professes. According to the theory here stated all these local characteristics are indications of spiritual myopia and defective enfranchisement from physical memories and material habits of thought. Nor is there one such vision, from the highest to the lowest, from the most ancient to the most modern, which does not bear the same marks of earthly distortion and adulteration. The visions of Swedenborg are full of such unconscious interpolations and perversions.

The danger of self-deception in all these spiritual adventures and experiments is obvious, and there are other dangers independent of the seeker's volition. The temptation to receive without much inquiry the flattering suggestion of a special revelation is of course in the very front rank of these incidental perils. The inquirer who ventures without due preparation and study to cross the boundary which divides the seen from the unseen is exposed, however, to far more subtle and insidious foes than the weaknesses and vanities of his own heart. He may easily drift into a Fool's Paradise wherein illusions of every kind cheat his undisciplined senses, and he may return to material existence

qualified to do much more harm than good by disseminating views which perhaps his personal character invests with a factitious authority. Nevertheless, the possibility of a certain insight to the phenomena of other conditions of existence is unaffected by these considerations, which after all only go to show the urgent need of caution both in essaying such excursions into the supra-mundane, and in dealing with the representations subsequently offered concerning discoveries made in them. It is perhaps scarcely necessary to point out that the novelist who undertakes such a theme as that of "Seraphita" must work under unfamiliar conditions. He is not free to give the reins to his imagination. He must be careful to maintain communication with his base, to use a military figure. He cannot employ machinery wholly unknown to his public, but must confine his efforts to embellishing and expanding those popular conceptions of spiritual phenomena reference to which is readily understood, even though the prevailing ideas may be poor, or grotesque, or gross. In "Seraphita" Balzac has followed this course with the success to have been expected from the versatility and subtlety of his genius. He has produced the most lofty and beautiful spiritual fiction to be found in literature.

Brief reference has been made already to a striking peculiarity in the portrait of Seraphita,—the fact, namely, that to Minna she conveys the impression of masculinity and to Wilfrid that of womanhood. So strange a confusion of sex, or perhaps it would be more exact to say so strange a dualism, certainly required

more explanation than Balzac has seen fit to offer ; and as the ideas involved relate to very ancient and recondite doctrines, it is necessary to treat the subject somewhat fully. Seraphita is intended to typify the nearest approach to physical and psychological perfection possible under the limitations of human existence. The whole narrative of her birth and training indicates this. Her parents are devout followers of Swedenborg, to whom they are related. There is much more of mystical spirituality than of material relations about their union and married life. In fact, the chief aim and end of both their lives seems to have been the securing of the proper conditions for the generation of a being who should be so pure and so in harmony with celestial things from her birth as to be capable of accomplishing in one incarnation the transition from the mortal to the divine. Seraphita as here represented offers curious analogies with Oriental theosophy. One might say that in Eastern terminology she was born to Arhatship ; and that though for her, as for all merely human beings, temptation and trial were unavoidable, her triumph was no less certain than that which Gotama Buddha attained to as the culmination of his vigil under the Bodhi tree. But the Northern ideal of human perfection embraced some conceptions which were less congenial to the Oriental intellect. It is one of the central merits of Christianity that it did much to recover for Woman the position too long denied her in the psychological scheme. Buddha indeed went far beyond his Asiatic predecessors in this direction. He admitted women to all the spiritual gains open to men, with one

exception. No woman could be a Buddha, according to him, though any woman might elevate herself to Arhatship. Christianity raised woman to the highest celestial dignities, and if in process of time superstition and bigotry warped and travestied the original pure symbolism and the early doctrines of the creed, much solid good remained from the mere familiarizing of men's minds with the higher view of womanly excellences and capacities.

In the esoteric creeds of many peoples, but chiefly those of European habitat, the place of Woman has for ages been, not merely among the highest, but literally the highest. She symbolized the Soul in the beautiful myth of Psyche. She was the spiritual element in humanity, lacking union with which mankind must be chained forever to the material, and waste his energies in struggles and labors which, even when most successful, only carried him farther from the true purpose of life, and rendered emancipation from carnal conditions more tedious and difficult. Something of this venerable doctrine may be gathered from the following citations, which occur in that beautifully written but mystical work called "The Perfect Way." Speaking of the "substance of existence," the authors say: "As Living Substance, God is One. As Life and Substance, God is Twain. HE is the Life, and SHE is the Substance. And to speak of Her is to speak of Woman in her supremest mode. She is not 'Nature;' Nature is the manifestation of the qualities and properties with which, under suffusion of the Life and Spirits

of God, Substance is endowed. She is not Matter, but is the potential essence of Matter. She is not Space, but is the *within* of Space, its fourth and original dimension, that from which all proceed, the containing element of Deity, and of which Space is the manifestation. As original Substance, the substance of all other substance, She underlies that whereof all things are made; and, like life and mind, is interior, mystical, spiritual, and discernible only when manifested in operation." The elucidation of the feminine principle is carried much further, and the whole passage will repay study, for it throws new light upon the mythologies and occult systems of many ages and peoples, and tends to exhibit a continuity of thought and a unity of conception regarding fundamentals, such as few would suspect who examine these questions hastily or without due preparation. The following passage relates to the concrete question in hand more directly: "As on the plane physical, man is not Man, — but only Boy, rude, froward, and solicitous only to exert and exhibit his strength, — until the time comes for him to recognize, appreciate, and appropriate Her as the woman; so on the plane spiritual, man is not Man, — but only Materialist, having all the deficiencies, intellectual and moral, the term implies, until the time comes for him to recognize, appreciate, and appropriate Her as the Soul, and counting Her as his better half, to renounce his own exclusively centrifugal impulsions, and yield to her centripetal attractions. Doing this with all his heart, he finds that

she makes him in the highest sense, Man. For, adding to his intellect Her intuition, she endows him with that true manhood, the manhood of Mind. Thus, by Her aid obtaining cognition of substance, and from the phenomenal fact ascending to the essential idea, he weds understanding to knowledge, and attains to certitude of truth, completing thereby the system of his thought."

In rejecting, as the present age has virtually done, the soul and her intuition, "man excludes from the system of his humanity the very idea of woman, and renounces his proper manhood." This it is which determines the wholly materialistic bent of modern physical science, and the coarse, callous, and corrupt tendencies which, as the century declines to its close, appear to characterize the prevailing civilization more strongly, and to emphasize with greater distinctness even the faintest reactionary movements and impulses. Balzac, in drawing Seraphita, was wholly true to the best received occult doctrine in endowing her with duality of sexual attributes, and the subtlety of his delineation is especially exhibited in the dominance of her womanly side. For though Minna is apparently misled by the masculine vigor and the self-contained resolution of her companion, the reader is permitted to see clearly enough that the impression which Seraphita produces upon Wilfrid is not only by far the stronger but by far the most natural; and this impression is that which the highest type of womanhood can alone create. But there is another symbol in this phase of Seraphita's nature.

For it is held that in truth and fact the dualism exaggerated for the sake of effect in her case is inherent in all human beings; that, to quote the same work once more, "whatever the sex of the person, physically, each individual is a dualism, consisting of exterior and interior, manifested personality and essential individuality, body and soul, which are to each other masculine and feminine, man and woman; he the without, she the within. And all that the woman, on the planes physical and social is to the man, that she is also on the planes intellectual and spiritual. For, as Soul and Intuition of Spirit, she withdraws him, physically and mentally, from dissipation and perdition in the outer and material; and by centralizing and substantializing him redeems and crowns him,—from a phantom converting him into an entity, from a mortal into an immortal, from a man into a god." For, without Love, Force can work only evil. It is the union of these two from which springs true progress,—the progress which overlooks the material and plants discovering feet in the permanent region of the spiritual. Woman is the symbol and the vehicle of the Divine Life. She is the one stable principle of human evolution,—the principle without which man's development would be in the line of decomposition instead of toward a higher vitality; his restless energies would wear themselves away in making the conditions of his existence more and more impossible of endurance. And this is the doctrine of all Hermetic Scriptures, including the Book of Genesis.

It is to be observed that Balzac does not follow

Swedenborg closely here. He goes rather to the sources of esoteric doctrine from which all students of occultism, from the earliest recorded times, have drawn their principles and the guiding outlines of their schemes of thought. It is also deserving of notice that however the personal element may and does alter and not infrequently disguise or pervert the details of such teachings, there is in the general form and character of them a certain harmony and close affinity which indicate community of origin; and as in the genesis of language philologists argue from root likenesses affiliation of several tongues which time has separated widely, with one mother tongue lost perhaps in the mists of antiquity, so from these indications of a common focus of knowledge may be inferred the pre-existence of such a spring and source; and not less rationally may be assumed in it a purity and approximation to absolute truth superior to the representations which have descended through defective vehicles, exposed to all the sophisticating influence of time and ignorance and materialism. Swedenborg was an agent in some respects peculiarly susceptible to these distorting influences. It does not appear that he at any time rose to the height of spiritual perception attained in the thoughts last quoted. Yet he recognized somewhat of the importance of the Womanhead in spiritual existence, and though he did not escape from the narrow and material views of Woman common to his age, he brought from his visions a reflection of the truth too exalted to be understood by his contemporaries.

“Man,” he says in one place, “is born an understanding, and woman a love.” And speaking again of marriage he says: “The wife cannot enter into the proper duties of the man; nor the man, on the other hand, into the proper duties of the wife; because they differ, as wisdom and its love, or thought and its affection, or understanding and its will. In the proper duties of men the understanding, thought, and wisdom act the chief part; but in the proper duties of wives the will, affection, and love act the chief part.” He recognizes also the necessity of harmonious conjunctions between the two natures to make the perfect man; but he does not realize the superior importance, the higher spirituality, of the woman’s nature. Here Balzac’s knowledge, intuitive or acquired, surpasses that of the teacher whose doctrine he has undertaken to illustrate, and in his conception of Seraphita he rises to the level of the loftiest mystical doctrine to which human faculty has ever attained.

Goethe, like Balzac, penetrated to the heart of the great problem in the last scene of the second part of “Faust.” His *Ewig-Weibliche* is the divine element which Woman both embodies and typifies, and to the purifying and stimulating emanations from which Man is indebted for whatever degree of enfranchisement from the clogging embraces of materialism he is enabled to accomplish. This is the force which *zieht uns hinan*, which lifts us toward higher spheres and inspires us with nobler aims; which on the physical plane keeps before our dull and earth-drawn eyes constant

examples of self-sacrifice, altruism, patience, compassion, and love stronger than death; which is most effective in subduing and extirpating the sordid animal tendencies and inclinations from our nature, and in substituting impulses and aspirations which may give us foothold in the path that leads toward a life better worth living. In the figure of Seraphita we contemplate the final efflorescence of such endeavor, the culminating product of a long chain of incarnations, during which the dominant impulse has been uniformly spiritual, and through which the carnal elements have been gradually subdued until at length they suffice only to give the mortal form coherency, and to supply the physical means of that inevitable agony of temptation which is the price of translation to the Divine, exacted equally from all who bear the conditions of earthly life, under whatever name they may be known. For when the day of Deliverance is about to dawn, the hosts of Mara assemble, or Satan calls his legions together, and the supreme test of the aspirant is undergone. Not for naught did the devisers of the mysteries of Eleusis subject the neophite to a series of ordeals requiring mental and physical resolution and intrepidity. These ordeals symbolized the difficulties and pains which must be endured by all who seek to pass directly from the natural to the celestial.

When — to employ for a moment the terminology of Schopenhauer — the mortal resolves upon exercising “the denial of the will to live,” all the forces of life marshal themselves in battle array against him. The

Temptation, which figures in so many religions, is the exoteric symbol of this inevitable conflict. Nature, which knows only the conditioned, revolts in every fibre against the unconditioned. The Mephistopheles of the material world, she cannot suffer any of her children to escape her, and when she perceives that they are bent upon renunciation she summons her Lemures to guard all the outlets and prevent the flight of the soul to higher spheres. Nor is purification, innocence, inherited elevation of spirit, preparedness for the taking on of more lofty conditions, any defence against these attacks. On the contrary, the greater the refinement the greater the sensibility. So the red Indian, bound to the stake, endures with stolidity torture which would destroy life in the highly strung nervous system of a civilized man. When Sir Robert Peel received the injuries from which he died, so acute was his sensitiveness that he could not tolerate the gentlest surgical examination, even the pressure of the bandages occasioning him so much pain that it was found necessary to remove them. It is true that great mental excitement may so completely dominate pain as to render those injured insensible to it. Thus in battle men desperately wounded will go on fighting sometimes until loss of blood causes them to faint. So also strong spiritual excitement may operate as an anæsthetic, as is shown in the case of martyrs who, while their bodies were burning, are reported to have spoken with all the indications of religious rapture or ecstasy. It is known that in the hypnotic state complete physical insensi-

bility may be induced, so that needles or knives can be plunged deep into the tissues without causing the least sensation. Similar phenomena have been observed in many phases of the mysterious and Protean conditions called hysterical. Thus the Convulsionnaires of St. Medard actually found satisfaction in being beaten with the utmost violence by strong men, and suffered themselves to be struck with heavy iron bars, experiencing no pain or injury from assaults which were quite severe enough to have killed persons in the normal state.

But none of these instances affect the fact that as a rule sensibility increases with the gradual predominance of the nervous system, which is one of the most marked concomitants of civilization. There is indeed one consideration which at first sight may appear not to be in accord with this theory. It has long been observed that women commonly bear pain better than men; and it is perhaps generally supposed that the sensibility of women is greater than that of men. Of course no conclusion of any value on such a point can be established in the absence of trustworthy data, and statistics here are unattainable. While, however, it may be admitted, as a deduction from general experience, that women are usually more patient under pain than men are, it is by no means so certain that their sensibility is greater than men's, nor should it be too hastily assumed that it is even equal to the latter. Reasoning from analogy it might be supposed that the capacity of women to bear pain would be greater than

that of men, because the performance of their natural functions requires them to bear more pain, and Nature always makes provision for special requirements of the kind. Endurance may be confounded with insensitiveness, moreover, and this renders it more difficult to arrive at the actual state of the case. Woman has been disciplined by centuries of servitude and oppression to a patience which man has not, save in certain subject races, learned to exhibit. The American Indian, trained from infancy to conceal his feelings, and especially to repress all signs of suffering, could face torture with firmness. The modern city-bred man undoubtedly dreads the dentist's chair more, and perhaps actually suffers more in it, than did the savage in the hands of his enemies. Women, however, without any preparation but that of heredity, endure prolonged and poignant suffering, and often, if not always, with a composure which men at least are prone to impute to inferior sensitiveness. This inferiority, if indeed it exists, is merely physical, for there can be no doubt as to the superior spiritual sensibility of women; and there is room for considerable hesitation regarding the other branch of the subject.

In regard, however, to the capacity for bearing the psychical agony inseparable from such struggles as have to be borne by all who attain to the great Deliverance, the higher resolution must be accorded to the woman, and this Balzac recognized in drawing the character of Seraphita. We see her, as the final change approaches, plunged in the horrors of a supreme con-

flict with all the earthly desires and longings and ambitions. This pure and nearly perfect creature is indeed beyond the reach of the gross animal passions and coarse lusts which sway and control the merely natural man. She has been relieved by her resolute and austere progenitors from those burdens. But still she is not exempt from the common destiny. When Gotama took his station under the Bodhi tree —

“ He who is the Prince
Of Darkness, Mara — knowing this was Buddh
Who should deliver man, and now the hour
When he should find the Truth and save the worlds —
Gave unto all his evil powers command.
Wherefore there trooped from every deepest pit
The fiends who war with Wisdom and the Light,
Arati, Trishna, Raga, and their crew
Of passions, horrors, ignorances, lusts,
The brood of gloom and dread ; all hating Buddh,
Seeking to shake his mind : nor knoweth one,
Not even the wisest, how those fiends of Hell
Battled that night to keep the truth from Buddh.”

Even so the pure Seraphita was assailed ; and if not perhaps with all the sensual temptations which Mara deployed under the eyes of the indomitable Tathagata, with enticements not less powerful, and seductions not less insidious. For such is the constitution of human nature that it is unable to pass even to a state the infinite superiority of which it is fully assured of, without experiencing reluctance and sadness,

“ For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind? ”

or, as the poet of “ The Light of Asia ” puts a like thought :

“ Sorrow is
Shadow to life, moving when life doth move;
Not to be laid aside until one lays
Living aside, with all its changing states,
Birth, growth, decay, love, hatred, pleasure, pain,
Being, and doing. How that none strips off
These sad delights and pleasant griefs who lacks
Knowledge to know them snares.”

Even the possession of that knowledge cannot avail to release the mortal from the pain of conflict. He may triumph over Mara in the end ; he may realize the illu-siveness of material existence ; he may attain to Nir-vana the blessed, the peaceful ; but he must win his way through the hosts of the tempter and prove his right to the crown by bearing the cross.

In this great ordeal Seraphita finds no help in her sin-lessness, because her spiritual development has brought with it not only increase of sensitiveness, but an expan-sion of the perceptive faculties which enables her to comprehend to the fullest extent the attractions and delights of the material opportunities and enjoyments she is required to renounce. The sacrifice demanded of her moreover embraces the slaying of Self. It is not only earthly desires that she must surrender, but all

desires ; for the yearning for the Divine, pure as it may seem, is capable of perversion into a disguised form of selfishness. She cannot cease to aspire, for all her nature is attuned heavenward ; but she must be prepared for any event, even for the disappointment of her dearest hopes. And that she is so prepared is shown in her reply to the inquiry of one of her companions as to whether, in dying, she expects to enter the Divine sphere at once. "I do not know," she replies. "It may be but one more step in advance ;" that is to say, she may not have reached the end of incarnation. But she must suffer temptation none the less for being uncertain of the future. She must demonstrate her fitness for translation independently of any guarantee. The reader is not admitted to the solemn spectacle of the agonized soul's passion ; and this is a fresh illustration of the delicacy and subtlety which characterize this masterpiece. It is Seraphita's old servant David who describes the contest between the Celestial and Infernal powers, in exalted and mystical terms appropriate to the theme. The interest and impressiveness of the situation are deepened by the contrasting discord of the sceptical pastor's sarcastic and incredulous comments. To him mistress and servant are alike mad. The excitement of David, which finds vent in the most ultra-Swedenborgian language, only amuses him. It is true that he is unable to explain, even to himself, many of the phenomena which he witnesses, but he fitly represents the natural world in getting rid of insoluble problems by the simple method of denying their existence.

There are crises in the night-long struggle, at which David seems almost to fear that Seraphita will succumb to her tempters; but it is clearly impossible that she should do so, having reached the elevation at which she is arrested in order that she may purge herself of the last earthly ties. The whole episode is full of beauty and suggestiveness, and it is so skilfully executed that no touch of bathos mars its deep spiritual charm.

The scene which follows the Temptation of Seraphita is intended to illustrate at once the clairvoyant and the intellectual powers of this marvellous creature. It is the final manifestation of the masculine elements in her nature, the demonstration of a superiority of knowledge and understanding not less marked than that of her spirituality. Wilfrid, who represents a soul in a state of unstable equilibrium, poised so insecurely that a comparatively feeble impulse may alter its direction upward or downward, is possessed by a strong but wholly carnal passion for the beautiful and mysterious maiden, and he is the vehicle — on the physical plane — of those material powers which are leagued in the endeavor to drag her back to earth. But Seraphita's spirituality is too strong for Wilfrid's materialism. She sees through his design, reads his character, and at once determines that he shall be saved from himself, and by marriage with Minna — the typical union between Understanding and Love — be set in the path of aspiration, and assisted toward the attainment of divine enfranchisement. At the same time Seraphita resolves to open the eyes of the sceptical pastor as far as may be pos-

sible, and to lift him out of his gross and paralyzing carnality. To these ends she addresses herself in the remarkable exposition and arguments which she delivers at a length which would be wearisome but for the lucidity, force and closeness of the reasoning, and the profound interest which attaches to the problems brought under discussion.

This speech is also to be regarded as a vindication of Intuition, for Seraphita is represented as having been reared entirely without education after the usual methods, and the pastor Becker naturally insists that she must be phenomenally ignorant, and quite incapable of showing a reason for her faith, however fanatical that faith may be. His object, therefore, is to test and expose her want of information, and so to convince Wilfrid, whose infatuation for her vexes him, that she is merely a self-deluded visionary, who probably inherits a strong tendency toward mysticism from her Swedenborgian parents. Seraphita at once perceives the mixed purposes of her visitors, and loses no time in showing that she understands the situation. Then she proceeds to dissect Becker's mind, to analyze his scepticism, to state his positions with care and candor, to allow all his objections and difficulties their full weight, and finally to retort upon him with a defence and exposition of the spiritual in the universe, which leaves him amazed and dumb. In concluding the review of M. Becker's doubts and the reasonings upon which they rest, it is to be noted that the feminine element in Seraphita again comes to the front. The understanding

does not suffice for the elucidation of the spiritual truths which are next to be dealt with. The Woman-Soul is at this point called upon to expound those highest mysteries which are involved in the apprehension of the great scheme of things. The key-note of this second and more elevated branch of Seraphita's discourse is struck in the opening words. "Belief is a gift. To believe is to feel. To believe in God it is necessary to feel God." Is this the language of Mysticism? Seraphita has in her opening remarks dwelt upon the fact — patent beyond serious controversy — that Man unites, or is the point of junction for, two worlds, the Finite and the Infinite. But if this be so how is it possible to explain all his relations in terms of the Finite; how can it be possible to comprehend all his relations without taking account of those which link him with the Infinite? Nevertheless, neither explanation nor comprehension is to be attained so long as the methods and the terminology of the inferior, the conditioned state, are alone employed in the investigation. The situation is precisely that of the men of science who involve themselves and others in hopeless confusion by discussing Spirit in terms of Matter. Neither can Matter be discussed in terms of Spirit. To each world its own terminology, its own methods and instruments of research. The Finite in Man can never apprehend Infinity; but the Infinite in Man may approach realization of that to which it is by unity of nature allied.

Belief, then, or Faith, is the key which alone opens

the door of the Infinite, and it does so by lifting the soul above the material plane, and endowing it with perceptive powers which cannot be acquired through any material educational methods. The Understanding can be cultivated to such an extent that it may explain and realize the meaning of the purely phenomenal; but there the limit of its capacity is reached. It is the agent of material apprehension, perfectly fitted to that end, and supreme judge in its own court. But its jurisdiction ceases where the domain of Faith begins, and the latter must be the guide and interpreter throughout the spiritual regions. The Understanding refuses to believe what it cannot grasp, and the position is perfectly natural and perfectly just. But the Understanding is, after all, only one element in the constitution of Man, and it is the lower power of the two which are given him for guidance. According to the philosophy of Louis Lambert (of which "Seraphita" is the final fruition) the civilization of the world is supported and carried forward in the main, and altogether so far as its material aspects are concerned, by what he terms the Abstractive, — that is, by those who confine themselves to the development of their intellectual faculties, and virtually ignore their spiritual side. There is no height or splendor or glory of material civilization which cannot be thus attained; but a purely material civilization, however brilliant and outwardly prosperous and flourishing it may appear, must contain the seeds of its own decay and overthrow, as all history teaches by the most pregnant and impressive examples. Unassisted Reason

shows the existence of many mysteries beyond the power of Reason to solve; yet Reason persists in rejecting the agencies whereby if at all these mysteries may be explained, — and in so acting renounces the hope of ever penetrating beyond secondary causes and phenomenal appearances. This, according to Seraphita, is the explanation of what is now called Agnosticism.

It may be of interest to see what Swedenborg teaches in this connection. Faith, according to the Swedish sage is “an internal acknowledgment of truth.” Faith and truth, he declares, are one, and the angels know nothing of faith, but what men call faith they call truth. But he affirms that “by things known to explore the mysteries of faith is as impossible as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, or for a rib to govern the purest fibrils of the chest and heart, — so gross, yea, much more gross, is the sensual and knowing relatively to the spiritual and celestial.” And concerning the belief in and acceptance of things not comprehended by the intellect, he says: “Every one may see that a man is governed by the principles he adopts, be they ever so false, and that all his knowledge and reasoning favor his principles; for innumerable considerations tending to support them readily present themselves to his mind, and thus he is confirmed in falsities. He, therefore, who assumes as a principle that nothing is to be believed until it is seen and understood can never believe; for spiritual and celestial things are neither seen with the eyes nor grasped by the imagination.” And again, he says: “There are

two principles, one of which leads to all folly and madness, the other to all intelligence and wisdom. The former principle is to deny all things, or to say in one's heart that he cannot believe them until he is convinced by what he can comprehend or be sensible of; this principle is what leads to all folly and madness, and may be called the negative principle. . . . Those who think from the negative principle, the more they take counsel of matters of reason, of knowledge, and of philosophy, the more they plunge themselves into darkness, until at length they come to deny all things. The reason is that from things inferior no one comprehends things superior, that is, things spiritual and celestial, — still less things divine, because they transcend all understanding; and besides, everything is then involved in negatives from the beginning.”

The argument of Seraphita is to the same effect. Finite Reason, she contends, cannot comprehend Infinite purposes and orderings. The measuring instrument which man seeks to apply to the divine is inadequate. He might be more modest if he could be made to see how frequently he fails to comprehend, not solely the Infinite, but phenomena which lie, so to speak, at his own door, and upon his own plane of existence. Again, this sceptical being ventures to deny God because of His intangibility and invisibility, while at the same time he gives name and form to abstractions, — as for instance, Number. It is true that Number is a reality, but the average man does not comprehend its significance, and the Number which he figures to himself, and

wherewith he amuses himself, is very different from the real Number. The same considerations apply to the abstractive Time and Space, neither of which is more than a name, representing no noumenon, answering to no actual entity, being in fact no more than an invention for the convenience of measuring those human relations which cannot be more truly and exactly estimated, because — and only because — the human mind is so inadequate to the work which it desires and attempts to perform. The human mind as confined and restricted by scepticism, that is ; for when opened by spiritual illumination it is capable of rising to great altitudes, and of apprehending many things in their true and ultimate significance.

The staple objection to the form of argument employed here by Seraphita is the futility of all modes of inquiry which transcend the Reason ; it being assumed that the human mind is incapable of receiving demonstration of truth otherwise than through the operation of the reasoning faculty, which proceeds entirely upon experience, and, where experience ends, ceases to have any *point d'appui*. A very fair example of this line of argument is to be found in Lotze's "Microcosmos." "If," that author observes, "reason is not of itself capable of finding the highest truth, but on the contrary stands in need of a revelation which is either contained in some divine act of historic occurrence, or is continually repeated in men's hearts, still reason must be able to understand the revealed truth at least so far as to recognize in it the satisfying and convincing conclu-

sion of those upward-soaring trains of thought which reason itself began, led by its own needs, but was not able to bring to an end. For all religious truth is a moral good, not a mere object of curiosity. It may therefore include some mysteries inaccessible to reason, but will only do so in as far as these are indispensable in order to combine satisfactorily other and obvious points of great importance; the secrecy of any mystery is in itself no reason for venerating it; a secrecy that was permanent and in its nature eternal would only be a reason for indifference towards anything which should thus refuse to be brought into connection with mental needs; and finally, above all things, to revel in secrets which are destined to remain secrets is necessarily not in accord with the notion of a revelation." The philosopher then proceeds to put these questions: "But must that which is a secret for cognition be always really a secret? Does not the nature of faith consist in this, that it affords a certainty of that which no cognition can grasp, as well of *what* it is, as *that* it is? And does not all science itself, when it has finished its investigations of particulars, come back to grasp, in a faith of which the certainty is indemonstrable and yet irrefragable, those highest truths on which the evidence of other knowledge depends? There is certainly a germ of truth in this rejoinder; but not the less clear is the essential difference that separates such scientific faith from religious faith." It is unnecessary to follow Lotze's argument further. Enough has been quoted to illustrate the common error of what Louis

Lambert would have called the abstractive method of ratiocination.

Seraphita tells Pastor Becker that he and she speak different languages in discussing these high questions, and the same may be said of all who take opposite sides on the question of psychologic capacities and potentialities. The position of Seraphita, who is a Specialist, should, however, be made clear. All knowledge is relative. There are mysteries which no created being can ever comprehend. As Seraphita puts it, "To understand God would be to *be* God." Thus also the Asiatic occultists, who profess to derive their knowledge of the origin and destiny of the universe from higher intelligences, corresponding in many respects to the angels of the Christian Church, affirm that neither their exalted correspondents and revelators nor the still higher beings with whom the latter are in relations, possess any knowledge of the Supreme Being. Science pretends no farther than to the origination of the universe by Motion; the genesis of that Motion lies beyond its utmost reach of apprehension. But the contention of Balzac is that a much higher knowledge than is attainable by the Reason is within the grasp of a duly trained and disciplined Humanity, developed in one direction through many incarnations, as Seraphita is supposed to have been, and so purified from the materialism which in the race at large obstructs perception that to her strengthened and clarified vision mysteries cease to be obscure, and the sphere of cognition is indefinitely enlarged. Of course it is apparent that such a being

cannot argue on anything like equal terms with such a gross sceptic as Pastor Becker. In her, intellection has already come to operate angelically rather than humanly, and what to her opponent appears paradox and incomprehensibility is to her demonstrated and familiar truth. Nowhere is the tension of Balzac's thought and the resolute maintenance of his imagination upon this elevated plane of imaginative creation more strikingly exhibited than in this long and subtle discourse of Seraphita. An inferior artist could not have borne so severe a test, but would have lapsed into commonplace before the end was reached. Seraphita, however, supports her high arguments with perfectly natural ease throughout. The philosophy of Louis Lambert will be recognized repeatedly in it. This is in accordance with the author's general scheme. Seraphita herself is the culmination of the noble body of thought outlined in "Louis Lambert." In her we see the consummation of the long process of transformation and evolution through and by which the mortal puts on immortality, the merely Human blossoms into the celestial.

It is also to be observed that though Balzac has modernized the conception of this marvellous and beautiful process, he is in no way to be regarded as the inventor of that conception. As to its origin we shall perhaps seek it in vain, for the deeper we explore the occult and religious literature of antiquity the more evidence we find of the archaism of the central belief. The doctrine of metempsychosis is correlated with that

of perfectibility, while the means by which the latter end may be attained have been so constantly and minutely discussed, tested, and analyzed by Eastern philosophers and psychologists as to furnish forth a complete code, the very terminology of which has bewildered and baffled Western philologists, men of science, and above all, theologians. Nevertheless, a belief in the possibility of realizing in the flesh a much higher knowledge and perception than materialist methods of education are capable of attaining to, has in various ways descended and persisted through all ages to the present time; and in support of this belief there has been preserved and recorded a certain amount of what, in almost any other case, would generally be accepted as substantive evidence, but in this case is accepted or rejected with little regard to its true evidential value, and for the most part according as the individual to whom it is submitted is dominated by Spiritual or Materialist prepossessions. It is true that in the West the credibility of all such phenomena has been weakened by the fading out of the doctrine of reincarnation; for apart from that doctrine every approximation to the higher life recorded must savor so much of miracle as to repel philosophic minds and cause consideration of the alleged facts to be refused or abandoned. In Oriental countries, where metempsychosis has never ceased to be accepted, it obviously supplies plausible explanations for many appearances which under other conditions would strongly suggest the supernatural. Among Asiatics, reincarnation is con-

sidered the normal, nay, the inevitable, career, and in connection with the Law of Karma it affords a faith which is held by a large proportion of the earth's inhabitants. Thus it is clear that the idea of Seraphita would be at once understood by a Hindu, who would see nothing fanciful or extravagant in the personification, which he would probably classify in his own mind as that of a female Rishi. Swedenborg, whether consciously or unconsciously, derived many of his beliefs as to other states of existence, it is not necessary to say from the Eastern sages, but at all events from the same sources which were open to those sages. He altered some of these Oriental ideas strangely, beyond a question, and clothed them with material garments such as would have bewildered the Indian philosophers, whose theories were of the soul, without the alloy of earth which modern civilization has, naturally perhaps, given to them. In some respects Seraphita is more Oriental than Swedenborgian; but in truth Balzac has put many occult principles together in fashioning this unique creature, and in the end he has, perhaps wisely, borrowed freely the imagery and the color as well as the general conceptions which characterize what are called the ecstatic visions of the Christian saints, especially the mystics of comparatively modern times.

The occult doctrine of Number is touched upon in Seraphita's discourse. As the subject has already been considered at some length in the Introduction to "Louis Lambert," and as Balzac makes his meaning comparatively clear, perhaps it is not necessary to reopen that

question ; to a full understanding of which, moreover, some knowledge of the Kabbala is requisite. It may, however, be as well to point out that Balzac does not follow Pythagoras in materializing Number ; the entities to which he refers are purely spiritual and mystical. But there is in this remarkable discourse of Seraphita a view of the straight line and the circle which it is necessary to examine carefully, for at first sight it appears to be in hopeless contradiction with all occult teaching. Having shown that the circle and the curve govern created forms, Seraphita proceeds thus : “ Who shall decide between rectilinear and curvilinear geometry ? between the theory of the straight line and that of the curve ? If in His vast work, the mysterious Artificer, who knows how to reach his ends miraculously fast, never employs a straight line except to cut off an angle and so obtain a curve, neither does man himself always rely upon it. The bullet which he aims direct proceeds by a curve, and when you wish to strike a certain point in space, you impel your bombshell along its cruel parabola. None of your men of science have drawn from this fact the simple deduction that the Curve is the law of the material worlds, and the Straight line that of the spiritual worlds ; one is the theory of finite creations, the other the theory of the infinite. Man, who alone in this world has a knowledge of the Infinite, can alone know the straight line ; he alone has the sense of verticality placed in a special organ. A fondness for the creations of the curve would seem to be in certain men an indication of the impurity of their nature still con-

joined to the material substances which engender us ; and the love of great souls for the straight line seems to show in them an intuition of heaven."

This doctrine is clearly not derived from Swedenborg, whose central theory of Correspondences is fundamentally in conflict with it. According to the Swedish seer everything material is a type and representation of something spiritual. Swedenborg's philosophical hypothesis of vortices, moreover, has nothing in common with this intimation of the superior spirituality of the line. That the circle is the most perfect of all figures is never doubted by the author of the vortical theory. Professor Winchell has condensed this theory conveniently, and from him a few sentences may be quoted : "The first cause is the infinite or unlimited. This gives existence to the first finite or limited. That which produces a limit is analogous to motion. The limit produced is a point, the essence of which is motion ; but being without parts, this essence is not actual motion but only a conatus to it. From this first proceed extension, space, figure, and succession, or time. As in geometry a point generates a line, a line a surface, and a surface a solid, so here the conatus of the point tends towards lines, surfaces, and solids. In other words, the universe is contained *in ovo* in the first natural point. The motion toward which the conatus tends is circular, *since the circle is the most perfect of all figures, and tendency to motion impressed by the Infinite must be tendency to the most perfect figure.*" And again : "The most perfect figure of the motion

above described must be the perpetually circular. . . . It must necessarily be of a spiral figure, which is the most perfect of all figures," — and much more reasoning to the same effect. And in this view of the circle Swedenborg does but follow the most ancient of occult doctrines, as may readily be perceived. The most venerable cosmogonic symbol is the point in the circle, — the point representing the creating Logos, the Breath of the Absolute imparting Motion to Matter; the circle typifying the unlimited, the Infinite, which includes and controls all created things. Again, the Spirit of Life and Immortality have from the earliest times been symbolized by the circle. The whole Kabbala proceeds upon the theory of circles, which is the formulating principle of the doctrine of Emanations. In all hermetic scriptures the same teaching will be found. The circle was the symbol of the most spiritual views. Thus Proclus says: "Before producing the material worlds which move in a circle, the Creative Power produced the *invisible* Circles." The Golden Egg of Brahma is another illustration of the universality of this doctrine. In fact, as is observed in "The Secret Doctrine," "In the secret doctrine the concealed unity — whether representing Parahrahman, or the 'Great Extreme' of Confucius, or the Deity concealed by Phtha, the Eternal light, or again, the Jewish En-Soph — is always found to be symbolized by a circle, or the 'nought' (absolute *No — Thing* and Nothing, because it is *infinite* and the All); while the God-manifested (by its works) is referred to as the *diameter of that circle*. The symbol-

ism of the underlying idea is thus made evident; the right line passing through the centre of a circle has, in the geometrical sense, length, but neither breadth nor thickness; it is an imaginary and feminine symbol, crossing eternity and made to rest on the plane of existence *of the phenomenal world*. It is dimensional, whereas its circle is dimensionless, or, to use an algebraical term, it is the dimension of an equation."

The doctrine of Correspondences, which requires that everything material must be patterned upon something spiritual is indeed not original with Swedenborg. We find it already formulated in the *Timæus* of Plato. *Timæus* there says: "Which of the patterns had the artificer in view when he made the world, the pattern which is unchangeable, or that which is created? If the world be indeed fair and the artificer good, then, as is plain, he must have looked to that which is eternal. . . . Every one will see that he must have looked to the eternal, for the world is the fairest of creations and he is the best of causes." And again *Timæus* says: "And he gave to the world figure which was suitable and also natural. But to the animal which was to comprehend all animals, that figure was suitable which comprehends within itself all other figures. Whereupon also he made the world in the form of a globe, round as from a lathe, in every direction equally distant from the centre to the extremes, the most perfect and the most like itself of all figures; for he considered that the like is infinitely fairer than the unlike." To the same effect may be cited Schopenhauer, who ob-

serves: "Throughout and everywhere the true symbol of nature is the circle, because it is the scheme or type of recurrence. This is, in fact, the most universal form in nature, which it carries out in everything, from the course of the stars down to the death and the genesis of organized beings, and by which alone, in the ceaseless stream of time, and its contents, a permanent existence, *i. e.*, a nature, becomes possible." Is not the curve too emblematic of all that to the human mind appears pure and beautiful and spiritual? What is it that appeals to the eye as beauty in regarding a landscape? A level plain upon which the sole relief of form occurs in straight trees, produces not only a passing impression of dreary monotony but affects the temperaments of all who inhabit it, as the character of the steppe-dweller everywhere demonstrates. So too in architecture. Its primitive forms, ere the arch was discovered, were harsh and almost repulsive. This may be seen in the earliest Egyptian architecture. The whole system was elevated by the introduction of the arch, and by the adoption of the curves of Nature in the lotus capital and the bulb-form pillar. Mentally eliminate the curves from the noblest architectural monuments, such as the Taj Mahal, and their charm is destroyed. Compare Shah Jehan's superb construction with the Parthenon, and it will be seen at once that while in the latter it is mainly the sense of symmetry which is impressed, the former awakens emotions of a far higher character, for it suggests a beauty scarcely of earth; it is in the perfect grace and exquisite harmony of its lines, in unity

with Nature's noblest mood, and might well be the creation of these Devas with which the mythology of Hindustan peoples the unseen universe. No poet can fail to perceive and take delight in the beauties of the curve as exhibited in Nature; and the poetical vision has never been more subtly or sweetly expressed than by Emerson: —

“ For Nature beats in perfect tune,
And rounds with rhyme her every rune,
Whether she work in land or sea,
Or hide underground her alchemy.
Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.”

So fond is Nature of the curve that it underlies all her work and gives to it the deepest charm and attraction. The straight line she does not greatly affect, nay, she takes a mischievous pleasure, apparently, in baffling man's efforts to establish it. Even her blindest forces resist its manifestations as by some law. “ Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,” but it “ carves the bow of beauty there.” The resistance of the tenuous atmosphere thwarts the downright, rectilinear impulse, and forces the staff into the curves which symbolize the perfection of form.

But Seraphita affirms that the curve is really the inferior symbol; that it belongs to and expresses the Finite; whereas the straight line pertains to the Infinite. How shall this paradox be explained? To the merely mortal understanding, nay, to that understand-

ing when raised to its highest power, the circle and the curve are and have ever been the symbols of the loftiest conceptions, the keys to the profoundest systems of thought. No doubt the line may be regarded mathematically as the sign of infinite extension, but it surely has little connection with Idealism, with Poetry, with Imagination, or Beauty, or Religion. With Duty it assuredly has clear and close affiliations, however, and that fact may well give us pause; for to comprehend Duty thoroughly is indeed to penetrate into arcana which, if such vision be possible to the finite, extend to the very threshold of infinity. There is nothing which so synthesizes and embraces Matter and Spirit as this same apprehension of Duty; and keeping fast hold of that idea we may perhaps be able to throw a little light upon Seraphita's meaning in the difficult passage under consideration. The ideal here concerned is indeed too little revered in these days. Yet it is as true as ever that "the path of duty is the way to glory," and that

"He that, ever following her commands,
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevail'd,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God himself is moon and sun."

For "Duty, lov'd of Love" is the highest test of human aspiration, the surest measure of human progress, and it may well be that the straight line which is associated with and symbolizes it is in the final analysis an intima-

tion and a belonging of that supreme existence whose remoteness and majesty transcend conditioned thought, and on this plane can only be dimly perceived as the Something which metaphysical analysis feels compelled to postulate in partial explanation of the Knowable.

The Logos, the Point within the Circle, was not, as often mistakenly supposed, held by the students of the archaic doctrine to be the Supreme or Absolute. It was really but the symbol of the Manifested, — that of which the human mind can in some way take cognizance. The old theogonies avoid the perplexities and contradictions so strongly presented by Seraphita when examining the doubts which assail the sceptical Pastor, by postulating a First Cause beyond the actual Artificer of the Universe. So Porphyry (cited by Taylor) says: “To that God who is above all things, neither external speech ought to be addressed, nor yet that which is inward.” Thus Proclus speaks of the highest principle as “more ineffable than all silence, and more occult than all essence,” and as being “concealed amidst the intelligible gods.” This is the Ain-Soph of the Kabbala, — the name given it there being almost synonymous in meaning with the Unknowable of modern Agnosticism, though the latter professes to find the Logos equally inscrutable. Now it is conceivable that while the circle is, as Seraphita says, the symbol of the Created, the line may be that of the Uncreated, that is to say, the Infinite. The fact that to us who exist on this earthly plane the circle presents the most perfect figure does not appear a really serious obstacle to the

reception of this view ; for the circle might very well be the most perfect figure as related to Matter in all its modifications, or even as related to the lower spiritual spheres into which alone it may be supposed that incarnated spirit is capable of penetrating ; and yet it might not be adapted to that highest form of existence which is altogether above and beyond human apprehension. Either this is the interpretation to be put upon Seraphita's statement concerning the relations and symbolism of the line and the circle, or it must be concluded that Balzac has fallen into an error so gross that it is incredible it should have been committed by a student of occultism in every other particular so firmly grounded.

There is indeed no theory advanced in either of the philosophical romances of Balzac which cannot be traced to authorities and co-ordinated with some accepted doctrine. He never delivers himself over recklessly to his fancy in these works, and the smallest suggestion has a significance of its own. In the present instance he certainly appears to traverse even widely adopted esoteric teachings, but the more reasonable assumption must be that this contradiction is only apparent and not fundamental. It moreover evidently encloses a bold conception, and one which is calculated to exalt the character and convey a lofty idea of the powers and perceptions of Seraphita. Never does she tower more majestically over her interlocutors and companions than when she is delivering herself of this magnificent thought ; and nowhere are the capabilities and poten-

tialities of humanity more strikingly and comprehensively suggested than in the intimation that man contains within himself an element which links him not alone with the highest heavens, but with that inscrutable, eternal power which transcends our conception of the celestial as much as that surpasses our material experience. The thought involved is indeed most noble. It is that the destiny of man connects him with an existence independent of and superior to all the changes which Matter can undergo; with an existence indissoluble by the termination either of Material or Spiritual universes; with an existence unaffected by *pralayas* and *manvantaras*, and which will bear him scathless through every catastrophe and cataclysm to which the formed and the formless worlds are said by Eastern occultism to be alike subject. The vista thus opened to the imagination is stupendous beyond question, but it may be explored boldly or timidly as the reader's inclinations and mental and spiritual tendencies determine.

The strictures of Seraphita upon the half-truths and fallacies of physical science may be studied profitably in connection with that critical work of Judge Stallo, "The Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics," which is cited in the Introduction to Louis Lambert. But the real uncertainty of many alleged scientific certainties is perhaps best shown in the mercilessly destructive criticism which rival men of science practise upon one another's theories and doctrines. The reference to "the greatest man among you" — who is said by

Seraphita, with rhetorical exaggeration, to have "died in despair" because toward the close of his life he realized the inadequacy of his favorite hypothesis to account for the universe—of course applies to Sir Isaac Newton, whose essay at interpretation of the Apocalypse caused his brother scientists to shrug their shoulders and lament the breaking down of that superb mind. Nor is it at all incredible that Newton should have been drawn to his Scriptural studies by recognition of the need for some such initiating and sustaining force, in the universe as the old doctrine of the Logos supplies. It is certain, as has been pointed out before, that he was by no means so self-confident as his followers, and that in particular he entertained serious doubts as to the sufficiency of his theory of gravitation, — doubts, be it said, which modern research and scientific progress have strengthened instead of diminishing. Indeed, Seraphita might have reinforced her argument with many more instances of scientific mistakes and insufficient explanations. There are to-day few even of the theories commonly regarded as most firmly established which do not present difficulties hitherto insoluble, and which are not cautiously held by men of truly open minds as at the best provisional, — convenient working hypotheses, but not to be safely made the ground of definitive conclusions.

At the close of Seraphita's harangue her auditors withdraw, confounded; but the impression produced upon their minds rapidly fades, and the next morning the Pastor is once more prepared to find, in the pages

of his favorite Wier, a clue to the mysterious knowledge and argumentative powers of the young girl, whom he would fain regard as insane or under "possession." As Balzac cites Wier on several occasions in this book, and as he is an author probably not known to the generality of readers, it may be well to give some account of his writings, the more particularly as there is some special significance in the reference to his once celebrated work on witchcraft. John Wier was a learned physician of Cleves, who was the first to publish a protest against the wild witchcraft panic that in the sixteenth and many preceding centuries, caused a frightful slaughter of deluded and innocent victims throughout Europe. Wier's book, entitled "*De Præstigiis Dæmonum*," would not in the present day be regarded as anything but a grossly superstitious work. The author was indeed no less credulous than his contemporaries. He believed with them that the atmosphere swarmed with evil spirits, that a personal devil went around like a roaring lion, destroying souls, that all manner of miraculous events were continually occurring. In fact, he accepted all the evidence upon which Sprenger, Bodin, and the whole school of the Inquisition, founded their theories of witchcraft; but he interpreted the alleged phenomena differently, and more in accord with the scientific spirit. His explanation was that many of the so-called witches were lunatics, and that the majority of those said to be bewitched, together with many accused of sorcery, were simply possessed by the devil. The latter, he argued, had no

need to act indirectly through witches, when he could delude his victims directly, and he disposed of the witch theory by asserting that Satan put it into the heads of the possessed to denounce old women as witches, in order that as much mischief and suffering as possible might be caused. Wier was a humane man, — a rare phenomenon in his time, — and the tortures and burnings occurring everywhere revolted him. He was careful to declare his opinion that all real witches deserved the most severe punishment; but he was plainly doubtful whether there were any real witches.

Conservative and credulous as his book appears now, it created intense indignation among the believers in witchcraft, who were not merely the majority of men then living, but, which seems far stranger, the majority of the educated and (relatively) intelligent class. In proof of this, the fact may be cited that Wier's book was answered by John Bodin, in an equally remarkable work entitled "*De la Démonomanie des Sorciers.*" Bodin attacked Wier with ferocity, upholding the authority of the indorsers of witchcraft and denouncing the kindly doctor of Cleves as little better than an atheist and a heretic. Now Bodin, as Lecky observes in his "*History of Rationalism,*" was "esteemed by many of his contemporaries the ablest man who had then arisen in France, and the verdict has been but little qualified by later writers. Amid all the distractions of a dissipated and intriguing court, and all the labors of a judicial position, he had amassed an amount

of learning so vast and so various as to place him in the very first rank of the scholars of his nation. He has also the far higher merit of being one of the chief founders of political philosophy and political history, and of having anticipated on these subjects many of the conclusions of our own day." Yet there is no superstition, no legend, no absurd and preposterous invention, no wild and grotesque imagination, too difficult to be received and digested by this philosopher and sage. He relies absolutely upon authority. He never questions traditions. He never reasons upon matters of fact. He never exhibits for a single moment a tendency toward scientific investigation, comparison, and inference. He abuses Wier in the old-fashioned dogmatic, theological manner. He calls his book a "tissue of horrible blasphemies." He declares that it cannot be read "without righteous anger." Wier has "armed himself against God;" he has done his best to disseminate witchcraft, to support the kingdom of Satan, and so forth through many pages. Yet Wier had truly not advanced very far before his age. He held to most of the old barbarous doctrines, and among them to that of the superior innate frailty and depravity of women. He, in common with many others, had asked himself why so large a proportion of alleged witches were women; and he, in common with many others, explained the fact by asserting that they were so prone to evil that Satan found them an easy prey. Perhaps it was especially because of Wier's chapter upon the weaknesses and wickedness of women that

Balzac chose this author as the favorite authority of Pastor Becker.

In the twenty-seventh chapter of his sixth book he cites a long array of classical writers in support of the contention that women have always been specially addicted to the employment of poison as an agent of revenge or passion. In the sixth chapter of his third book he observes: "Le diable ennemi fin, ruzé et cauteleux, induit volontiers le sexe féminin, lequel est inconstant à raison de sa complexion, de legere croyance, malicienx, impatient, melancolique pour ne pouvoir commander à ses afections; et principalement les vieilles, débiles, stupides et d'esprit chancelant." This is why that Old Serpent addressed himself rather to Eve than to Adam; and this is why he so easily seduced Eve. The holy Saint Peter also has denominated them "weak vessels," and Saint Chrysostom has remarked, in his homily upon Matthew, that the female sex is imprudent and ductile, easily influenced and swayed, either from good to evil or from evil to good. He ventures into the difficult region of etymology in search of further proof, and discovers one in the derivation of the Latin *mulier* from *mollis* or *molli*, "which signifies softness." It may be conjectured that when Pastor Becker sought in the treatise of John Wier confirmation of his theory regarding Seraphita's inspiration, he had in mind the worthy doctor's views concerning women, and their special fitness as vehicles of diabolical influences. Pastor Becker refers, as a case in point, to the history of a young Italian girl who, at the age of

twelve, spoke forty-two languages, ancient and modern. Wier has a story of a Saxon woman, unable to read or write, who "being possessed by the devil" spoke in Latin and Greek, and prophesied concerning future events, — all of which came to pass. He also tells of an idiotic Italian woman who, being under the same infernal influence, and asked which was Virgil's finest verse, replied suddenly —

"Discite justitiam moniti et non temnere Divos."

It is an interesting point in these old ideas that the mediæval notions about women rested upon observation of the essential differences between the masculine and feminine natures; but external observation alone. To quote Lecky's admirable analysis of mediæval persecution again: "The question why the immense majority of those who were accused of sorcery should be women early attracted attention; and it was generally answered, not by the sensibility of their nervous constitution, and by their consequent liability to religious monomania and epidemics, but by the inherent wickedness of the sex. There was no subject on which the old writers expatiated with more indignant eloquence, or with more copious illustration," — of which we have just given an example in John Wier. Another instance of the horrible perversion of ideas which characterized those dark ages may be found in the interpretation given to the superior constancy of women in facing torture. The contemporary explanation of this was that the Devil provided all witches with means

of withstanding the torment ; and the inevitable corollary of such reasoning was a stimulation of ingenuity in devising and applying more searching and cruel tortures to women. There can be no question that had Seraphita lived in the time of Wier and Bodin the former would have considered her a demoniac, and the latter would have denounced her as a witch, the only fit destiny of whom was the stake ; and it may be that Balzac intended to hint at the contrast between mediæval and modern thought in introducing, in John Wier, the most signal, but at the same time narrow and feeble, illustration of sixteenth century liberalism.

The sixth chapter of " Seraphita " is chiefly occupied with the beautiful and noble discourse in which the dying mystic unfolds to her companions the secret of " the Path." Up to this time Wilfrid, who represents the Abstractive type, has failed to understand Seraphita. Earthly ambitions still burn fiercely in his breast. He cherishes what seem to him high thoughts of conquest. He would go to Central Asia and plot against the British supremacy in India. He would head such a formidable irruption of Asiatic tribes as Genghis Khan organized. He thinks that the prospect of sovereignty, of Oriental luxury and splendor, will tempt Seraphita, and he lays before her his far-reaching schemes and invites her to share his glory. But Seraphita smiles. There is for her no temptation in such offers. As she says, beings more powerful than Wilfrid have already sought to dazzle her with far greater gifts. Minna approaches with a more dangerous because a

purser and higher petition. She offers nothing but herself as a vicarious sufferer. Love raises her above the sphere of the Abstractive. Already the divine is shining through her envelope of flesh. Already the tender loyal heart has found the entrance to the Path by which alone the celestial sphere can be attained. Then the prophetic vision of Seraphita recognizes in these two the elements of Force and Love which, when purified by the discipline of patient suffering, will unite to constitute the relatively perfect Angelic entity. This is the meaning of the exclamation she utters in gazing upon Wilfrid and Minna before she begins her final address to them.

That address may be regarded as in some sense a recapitulation of all the doctrines indicated and shadowed forth in the preceding parts of the story. Once more, and now with large insistence, the doctrine of reincarnation is dwelt upon, and referred to as the necessary and sole explanation of human evolution. Balzac here treats it more in detail than he has done elsewhere, although it is the basis of Seraphita's history, and makes intelligible the whole structure of her existence and theosophy. Seraphita traces existence from the Instinctive sphere upward. The lower life is occupied, she says, with exploitation of the purely material. It is there that the inevitable lust of possession has to be worked out. It is there that men toil and struggle to amass earthly treasures, and, having succeeded, slowly realize the uselessness of such riches. Matter must be exhausted before Spirit assumes control, and it may

happen that many existences are required to expend the craving for impermanent possessions. As a rule men indulge their lowest desires to satiety, and it is only when disgust overcomes them, when the emptiness of all mundane enjoyments is demonstrated by prolonged experiment, that they begin to seek a more excellent way. The long period of education is protracted still further by relapses and excesses. "A lifetime is often no more than sufficient to acquire virtues which balance the vices of the preceding existence." At length suffering brings love, and love self-sacrifice, and that aspiration, and aspiration, prayer; which is the direct bond of union between the finite and the infinite. It is indeed no new lesson. The directions for gaining the strait and narrow path have been vouchsafed to the sons of men in countless forms and ways, and with characteristic perseverance and malign ingenuity they have nullified their opportunities again and again by quarrelling over the phraseology and disputing the authority of the guide-books, while ignoring the significance of the essential harmony which subsists between all the rules laid down for the attainment of ultimate felicity and emancipation from evil. Yet the recognition of the superior attractions of the Divine can never be for all alike. For the souls still chained to Matter in the Instinctive sphere, for the majority even of the Abstractives, the allurements of the impermanent world must continue to be insuperable. It is only the minority who possess the courage to endure what follows every sincere movement of separation from the Material. The

latter, though in one sense but a condition of Spirit, is in its lower forms hostile to Spirit, and it resents its renunciation by the few who elect to enter the Path. Instinctive Man not only deliberately prefers his inferiority, but regards with positive enmity all who evince a desire to ascend in the scale of existence. This enmity is in part automatic and literally instinctive, and resembles the resistance which an air-breathing creature offers to immersion in the water. Instinctive Man cannot breathe nor live in the rarified atmosphere of the Divine, and feeling this he fights with all his strength against every attempt to raise him to that uninhabitable sphere. The Path once chosen, therefore, the pilgrim must make his account with persecution and scorn and ill-feeling. The world will not let him go at all willingly, and if he tear himself away will surely follow him with its sharp displeasure.

These two, however, — Wilfrid and Minna, — were, as Seraphita knows, prepared by previous incarnations to take the step which should separate them from the world ; and her final task is the application of the stimulus which shall determine them in entering upon their new and arduous career. As he listens to the seraphic eloquence of the mysterious being he has in vain tried to entangle in the meshes of an earthly love, Wilfrid feels his carnal impulses dying, and a purer, loftier aspiration takes their place. For the first time he begins to comprehend who and what Seraphita is. For the first time he is made to perceive the delusive character of his dreams of earthly glory and magnificence.

For the first time, also, he looks upon the human girl beside him with a feeling of respect and sympathy, and is drawn toward her by the attraction of a common yearning after the higher life. Then the work of Seraphita on the plane of humanity is finished, and in a final burst of rapture and adoration her spirit breaks the last fragile bonds uniting it to the body, and she rises into the celestial spheres to receive judgment, reward, whatever is awaiting her. The final chapter, entitled "The Assumption" by Balzac, is an exquisitely imagined vision. Wilfrid and Minna, kneeling by the body of Seraphita, are rapt into the heavens. For a time their spirits are permitted to leave their shells and traverse the lower fields of space, whence they are enabled to witness the splendor and majesty of their late companion's divine initiation. There is no need to follow or interpret this closing scene. It is only necessary to say that it fitly concludes a marvellous work; that notwithstanding the unavoidable employment of some conventional forms, the elevation, nobility, solemnity, and beauty of the whole picture render it a literary masterpiece, scarcely equalled and not surpassed by the most glowing conceptions of the greatest mystical poets.

So ends Balzac's philosophical trilogy. The human imagination, stretched to the utmost in sustaining these last and loftiest creations, can proceed no farther. The author has traced the evolution of the spirit from the natural to the divine world. Beyond the threshold of the latter it is not given to incarnated souls to pene-

trate save in vision, but the path which leads upward has been indicated with equal skill and subtlety, and some intimation has been given of the glories which attend translation to the celestial sphere. As a literary experiment "Seraphita" stands alone. It is bold, — some may think even to rashness, — but its beauty and spirituality must be admitted, and it crowns a difficult and laborious enterprise finely, harmoniously, and majestically.

GEORGE FREDERIC PARSONS.

SERAPHITA.



I.

SERAPHITUS.

As the eye glances over a map of the coasts of Norway, can the imagination fail to marvel at their fantastic indentations and serrated edges, like a granite lace, against which the surges of the North Sea roar incessantly? Who has not dreamed of the majestic sights ever to be seen on those beachless shores, of that multitude of creeks and inlets and little bays, no two of them alike, yet all trackless abysses? We may almost fancy that Nature took pleasure in recording by ineffaceable hieroglyphics the symbol of Norwegian life, bestowing on these coasts the conformation of a fish's spine, fishery being the staple commerce of the country, and well-nigh the only means of living of the hardy men who cling like tufts of lichen to the arid cliffs. Here, through fourteen degrees of longitude, barely seven hundred thousand souls maintain existence. Thanks to perils devoid of glory, to year-long snows which clothe the Norway peaks and guard them from profaning foot of traveller, these sublime beauties are

virgin still ; they will be seen to harmonize with human phenomena, also virgin — at least to poetry — which here took place, the history of which it is our purpose to relate.

If one of these inlets, mere fissures to the eyes of the eider-ducks, is wide enough for the sea not to freeze between the prison-walls of rock against which it surges, the country-people call the little bay a *fiord*, — a word which geographers of every nation have adopted into their respective languages. Though a certain resemblance exists among all these fiords, each has its own characteristics. The sea has everywhere forced its way as through a breach, yet the rocks about each fissure are diversely rent, and their tumultuous precipices defy the rules of geometric law. Here the scarp is dented like a saw ; there the narrow ledges barely allow the snow to lodge or the noble crests of the Northern pines to spread themselves ; farther on, some convulsion of Nature may have rounded a coquettish curve into a lovely valley flanked in rising terraces with black-plumed pines. Truly we are tempted to call this land the Switzerland of Ocean.

Midway between Trondhjem and Christiansand lies an inlet called the Ström-fiord. If the Ström-fiord is not the loveliest of these rocky landscapes, it has the merit of displaying the terrestrial grandeurs of Norway, and of enshrining the scenes of a history that is indeed celestial.

The general outline of the Ström-fiord seems at first sight to be that of a funnel washed out by the sea.

The passage which the waves have forced present to the eye an image of the eternal struggle between old Ocean and the granite rock, — two creations of equal power, one through inertia, the other by ceaseless motion. Reefs of fantastic shape run out on either side, and bar the way of ships and forbid their entrance. The intrepid sons of Norway cross these reefs on foot, springing from rock to rock, undismayed at the abyss — a hundred fathoms deep and only six feet wide — which yawns beneath them. Here a tottering block of gneiss falling athwart two rocks gives an uncertain footway; there the hunters or the fishermen, carrying their loads, have flung the stems of fir-trees in guise of bridges, to join the projecting reefs, around and beneath which the surges roar incessantly. This dangerous entrance to the little bay bears obliquely to the right with a serpentine movement, and there encounters a mountain rising some twenty-five hundred feet above sea-level, the base of which is a vertical palisade of solid rock more than a mile and a half long, the inflexible granite nowhere yielding to clefts or undulations until it reaches a height of two hundred feet above the water. Rushing violently in, the sea is driven back with equal violence by the inert force of the mountain to the opposite shore, gently curved by the spent force of the retreating waves.

The fiord is closed at the upper end by a vast gneiss formation crowned with forests, down which a river plunges in cascades, becomes a torrent when the snows are melting, spreads into a sheet of waters, and then

falls with a roar into the bay, — vomiting as it does so the hoary pines and the aged larches washed down from the forests and scarce seen amid the foam. These trees plunge headlong into the fiord and reappear after a time on the surface, clinging together and forming islets which float ashore on the beaches, where the inhabitants of a village on the left bank of the Ström-fiord gather them up, split, broken (though sometimes whole), and always stripped of bark and branches. The mountain which receives at its base the assaults of Ocean, and at its summit the buffeting of the wild North wind, is called the Falberg. Its crest, wrapped at all seasons in a mantle of snow and ice, is the sharpest peak of Norway; its proximity to the pole produces, at the height of eighteen hundred feet, a degree of cold equal to that of the highest mountains of the globe. The summit of this rocky mass, rising sheer from the fiord on one side, slopes gradually downward to the east, where it joins the declivities of the Sieg and forms a series of terraced valleys, the chilly temperature of which allows no growth but that of shrubs and stunted trees.

The upper end of the fiord, where the waters enter it as they come down from the forest, is called the Siegdahlen, — a word which may be held to mean “the shedding of the Sieg,” — the river itself receiving that name. The curving shore opposite to the face of the Falberg is the valley of Jarvis, — a smiling scene overlooked by hills clothed with firs, birch-trees, and larches, mingled with a few oaks and beeches, the richest coloring of all

the varied tapestries which Nature in these northern regions spreads upon the surface of her rugged rocks. The eye can readily mark the line where the soil, warmed by the rays of the sun, bears cultivation and shows the native growth of the Norwegian flora. Here the expanse of the fiord is broad enough to allow the sea, dashed back by the Falberg, to spend its expiring force in gentle murmurs upon the lower slope of these hills, — a shore bordered with finest sand, strewn with mica and sparkling pebbles, porphyry, and marbles of a thousand tints, brought from Sweden by the river floods, together with ocean waifs, shells, and flowers of the sea driven in by tempests, whether of the Pole or Tropics.

At the foot of the hills of Jarvis lies a village of some two hundred wooden houses, where an isolated population lives like a swarm of bees in a forest, without increasing or diminishing; vegetating happily, while wringing their means of living from the breast of a stern Nature. The almost unknown existence of the little hamlet is readily accounted for. Few of its inhabitants were bold enough to risk their lives among the reefs to reach the deep-sea fishing, — the staple industry of Norwegians on the least dangerous portions of their coast. The fish of the fiord were numerous enough to suffice, in part at least, for the sustenance of the inhabitants; the valley pastures provided milk and butter; a certain amount of fruitful, well-tilled soil yielded rye and hemp and vegetables, which necessity taught the people to protect against the severity of

the cold and the fleeting but terrible heat of the sun with the shrewd ability which Norwegians display in the two-fold struggle. The difficulty of communication with the outer world, either by land where the roads are impassable, or by sea where none but tiny boats can thread their way through the maritime defiles that guard the entrance to the bay, hinder these people from growing rich by the sale of their timber. It would cost enormous sums to either blast a channel out to sea or construct a way to the interior. The roads from Christiana to Trondhjem all turn toward the Ström-fiord, and cross the Sieg by a bridge some score of miles above its fall into the bay. The country to the north, between Jarvis and Trondhjem, is covered with impenetrable forests, while to the south the Falberg is nearly as much separated from Christiana by inaccessible precipices. The village of Jarvis might perhaps have communicated with the interior of Norway and Sweden by the river Sieg; but to do this and to be thus brought into contact with civilization, the Ström-fiord needed the presence of a man of genius. Such a man did actually appear there, — a poet, a Swede of great religious fervor, who died admiring, even reverencing this region as one of the noblest works of the Creator.

Minds endowed by study with an inward sight, and whose quick perceptions bring before the soul, as though painted on a canvas, the contrasting scenery of this universe, will now apprehend the general features of the Ström-fiord. They alone, perhaps, can thread their way through the tortuous channels of the

reef, or flee with the battling waves to the everlasting rebuff of the Falberg whose white peaks mingle with the vaporous clouds of the pearl-gray sky, or watch with delight the curving sheet of waters, or hear the rushing of the Sieg as it hangs for an instant in long fillets and then falls over a picturesque abatis of noble trees toppled confusedly together, sometimes upright, sometimes half-sunken beneath the rocks. It may be that such minds alone can dwell upon the smiling scenes nestling among the lower hills of Jarvis; where the luscious Northern vegetables spring up in families, in myriads, where the white birches bend, graceful as maidens, where colonnades of beeches rear their boles mossy with the growths of centuries, where shades of green contrast, and white clouds float amid the blackness of the distant pines, and tracts of many-tinted crimson and purple shrubs are shaded endlessly; in short, where blend all colors, all perfumes of a flora whose wonders are still ignored. Widen the boundaries of this limited amphitheatre, spring upward to the clouds, lose yourself among the rocks where the seals are lying and even then your thought cannot compass the wealth of beauty nor the poetry of this Norwegian coast. Can your thought be as vast as the ocean that bounds it? as weird as the fantastic forms drawn by these forests, these clouds, these shadows, these changeful lights?

Do you see above the meadows on that lowest slope which undulates around the higher hills of Jarvis two or three hundred houses roofed with "nøever," a sort

of thatch made of birch-bark, — frail houses, long and low, looking like silk-worms on a mulberry-leaf tossed hither by the winds? Above these humble, peaceful dwellings stands the church, built with a simplicity in keeping with the poverty of the villagers. A graveyard surrounds the chancel, and a little farther on you see the parsonage. Higher up, on a projection of the mountain is a dwelling-house, the only one of stone; for which reason the inhabitants of the village call it “the Swedish Castle.” In fact, a wealthy Swede settled in Jarvis about thirty years before this history begins, and did his best to ameliorate its condition. This little house, certainly not a castle, built with the intention of leading the inhabitants to build others like it, was noticeable for its solidity and for the wall that inclosed it, a rare thing in Norway where, notwithstanding the abundance of stone, wood alone is used for all fences, even those of fields. This Swedish house, thus protected against the climate, stood on rising ground in the centre of an immense courtyard. The windows were sheltered by those projecting pent-house roofs supported by squared trunks of trees which give so patriarchal an air to Northern dwellings. From beneath them the eye could see the savage nudity of the Falberg, or compare the infinitude of the open sea with the tiny drop of water in the foaming fiord; the ear could hear the flowing of the Sieg, whose white sheet far away looked motionless as it fell into its granite cup edged for miles around with glaciers, — in short, from this

vantage ground the whole landscape whereon our simple yet superhuman drama was about to be enacted could be seen and noted.

The winter of 1799–1800 was one of the most severe ever known to Europeans. The Norwegian sea was frozen in all the fiords, where, as a usual thing, the violence of the surf kept the ice from forming. A wind, whose effects were like those of the Spanish levanter, swept the ice of the Ström-fiord, driving the snow to the upper end of the gulf. Seldom indeed could the people of Jarvis see the mirror of frozen waters reflecting the colors of the sky; a wondrous sight in the bosom of these mountains when all other aspects of nature are levelled beneath successive sheets of snow, and crests and valleys are alike mere folds of the vast mantle flung by winter across a landscape at once so mournfully dazzling and so monotonous. The falling volume of the Sieg, suddenly frozen, formed an immense arcade beneath which the inhabitants might have crossed under shelter from the blast had any dared to risk themselves inland. But the dangers of every step away from their own surroundings kept even the boldest hunters in their homes, afraid lest the narrow paths along the precipices, the clefts and fissures among the rocks, might be unrecognizable beneath the snow.

Thus it was that no human creature gave life to the white desert where Boreas reigned, his voice alone resounding at distant intervals. The sky, nearly always gray, gave tones of polished steel to the ice of

the fiord. Perchance some ancient eider-duck crossed the expanse, trusting to the warm down beneath which dream, in other lands, the luxurious rich, little knowing of the dangers through which their luxury has come to them. Like the Bedouin of the desert who darts alone across the sands of Africa, the bird is neither seen nor heard; the torpid atmosphere, deprived of its electrical conditions, echoes neither the whirr of its wings nor its joyous notes. Besides, what human eye was strong enough to bear the glitter of those pinnacles adorned with sparkling crystals, or the sharp reflections of the snow, iridescent on the summits in the rays of a pallid sun which infrequently appeared, like a dying man seeking to make known that he still lives. Often, when the flocks of gray clouds, driven in squadrons athwart the mountains and among the tree-tops, hid the sky with their triple veils Earth, lacking the celestial lights, lit herself by herself.

Here, then, we meet the majesty of Cold, seated eternally at the pole in that regal silence which is the attribute of all absolute monarchy. Every extreme principle carries with it an appearance of negation and the symptoms of death; for is not life the struggle of two forces? Here in this Northern nature nothing lived. One sole power — the unproductive power of ice — reigned unchallenged. The roar of the open sea no longer reached the deaf, dumb inlet, where during one short season of the year Nature made haste to produce the slender harvests necessary for the food of the patient people. A few tall pine-trees lifted their black

pyramids garlanded with snow, and the form of their long branches and depending shoots completed the mourning garments of those solemn heights.

Each household gathered in its chimney-corner, in houses carefully closed from the outer air, and well supplied with biscuit, melted butter, dried fish, and other provisions laid in for the seven-months winter. The very smoke of these dwellings was hardly seen, half-hidden as they were beneath the snow, against the weight of which they were protected by long planks reaching from the roof and fastened at some distance to solid blocks on the ground, forming a covered way around each building.

During these terrible winter months the women spun and dyed the woollen stuffs and the linen fabrics with which they clothed their families, while the men read, or fell into those endless meditations which have given birth to so many profound theories, to the mystic dreams of the North, to its beliefs, to its studies (so full and so complete in one science, at least, sounded as with a plummet), to its manners and its morals, half-monastic, which force the soul to react and feed upon itself and make the Norwegian peasant a being apart among the peoples of Europe.

Such was the condition of the Ström-fjord in the first year of the nineteenth century and about the middle of the month of May.

On a morning when the sun burst forth upon this landscape, lighting the fires of the ephemeral diamonds produced by crystallizations of the snow and ice, two

beings crossed the fiord and flew along the base of the Falberg, rising thence from ledge to ledge toward the summit. What were they? human creatures, or two arrows? They might have been taken for eider-ducks sailing in consort before the wind. Not the boldest hunter nor the most superstitious fisherman would have attributed to human beings the power to move safely along the slender lines traced beneath the snow by the granite ledges, where yet this couple glided with the terrifying dexterity of somnambulists who, forgetting their own weight and the dangers of the slightest deviation, hurry along a ridge-pole and keep their equilibrium by the power of some mysterious force.

“Stop me, Seraphitus,” said a pale young girl, “and let me breathe. I look at you, you only, while scaling these walls of the gulf; otherwise, what would become of me? I am such a feeble creature. Do I tire you?”

“No,” said the being on whose arm she leaned. “But let us go on, Minna; the place where we are is not firm enough to stand on.”

Once more the snow creaked sharply beneath the long boards fastened to their feet, and soon they reached the upper terrace of the first ledge, clearly defined upon the flank of the precipice. The person whom Minna had addressed as Seraphitus threw his weight upon his right heel, arresting the plank — six and a half feet long and narrow as the foot of a child — which was fastened to his boot by a double thong of leather. This plank, two inches thick, was covered with reindeer skin, which bristled against the snow when the foot was raised, and

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served to stop the wearer. Seraphitus drew in his left foot, furnished with another "skee," which was only two feet long, turned swiftly where he stood, caught his timid companion in his arms, lifted her in spite of the long boards upon her feet, and placed her on a projecting rock from which he brushed the snow with his pelisse.

"You are safe there, Minna; you can tremble at your ease."

"We are a third of the way up the Ice-Cap," she said, looking at the peak to which she gave the popular name by which it is known in Norway; "I can hardly believe it."

Too much out of breath to say more, she smiled at Seraphitus, who, without answering, laid his hand upon her heart and listened to its sounding throbs, rapid as those of a frightened bird.

"It often beats as fast when I run," she said.

Seraphitus inclined his head with a gesture that was neither coldness nor indifference, and yet, despite the grace which made the movement almost tender, it none the less bespoke a certain negation, which in a woman would have seemed an exquisite coquetry. Seraphitus clasped the young girl in his arms. Minna accepted the caress as an answer to her words, continuing to gaze at him. As he raised his head, and threw back with impatient gesture the golden masses of his hair to free his brow, he saw an expression of joy in the eyes of his companion.

"Yes, Minna," he said in a voice whose paternal

accents were charming from the lips of a being who was still adolescent, "Keep your eyes on me; do not look below you."

"Why not?" she asked.

"You wish to know why? then look!"

Minna glanced quickly at her feet and cried out suddenly like a child who sees a tiger. The awful sensation of abysses seized her; one glance sufficed to communicate its contagion. The fiord, eager for food, bewildered her with its loud voice ringing in her ears, interposing between herself and life as though to devour her more surely. From the crown of her head to her feet and along her spine an icy shudder ran; then suddenly intolerable heat suffused her nerves, beat in her veins and overpowered her extremities with electric shocks like those of the torpedo. Too feeble to resist, she felt herself drawn by a mysterious power to the depths below, wherein she fancied that she saw some monster belching its venom, a monster whose magnetic eyes were charming her, whose open jaws appeared to craunch their prey before they seized it.

"I die, my Seraphitus, loving none but thee," she said, making a mechanical movement to fling herself into the abyss.

Seraphitus breathed softly on her forehead and eyes. Suddenly, like a traveller relaxed after a bath, Minna forgot these keen emotions, already dissipated by that caressing breath which penetrated her body and filled it with balsamic essences as quickly as the breath itself had crossed the air.

“Seraphitus breathed softly on her forehead and eyes.”



Jules Guardet

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“Who art thou?” she said, with a feeling of gentle terror. “Ah, but I know! thou art my life. How canst thou look into that gulf and not die?” she added presently.

Seraphitus left her clinging to the granite rock and placed himself at the edge of the narrow platform on which they stood, whence his eyes plunged to the depths of the fiord, defying its dazzling invitation. His body did not tremble, his brow was white and calm as that of a marble statue, — an abyss facing an abyss.

“Seraphitus! dost thou not love me? come back!” she cried. “Thy danger renews my terror. Who art thou to have such superhuman power at thy age?” she asked as she felt his arms inclosing her once more.

“But, Minna,” answered Seraphitus, “you look fearlessly at greater spaces far than that.”

Then with raised finger, this strange being pointed upward to the blue dome, which parting clouds left clear above their heads, where stars could be seen in open day by virtue of atmospheric laws as yet unstudied.

“But what a difference!” she answered smiling.

“You are right,” he said; “we are born to stretch upward to the skies. Our native land, like the face of a mother, cannot terrify her children.”

His voice vibrated through the being of his companion, who made no reply.

“Come! let us go on,” he said.

The pair darted forward along the narrow paths traced back and forth upon the mountain, skimming

from terrace to terrace, from line to line, with the rapidity of a barb, that bird of the desert. Presently they reached an open space, carpeted with turf and moss and flowers, where no foot had ever trod.

“Oh, the pretty sæter!” cried Minna, giving to the upland meadow its Norwegian name. “But how comes it here, at such a height?”

“Vegetation ceases here, it is true,” said Seraphitus. “These few plants and flowers are due to that sheltering rock which protects the meadow from the polar winds. Put that tuft in your bosom, Minna,” he added, gathering a flower, — “that balmy creation which no eye has ever seen; keep the solitary matchless flower in memory of this one matchless morning of your life. You will find no other guide to lead you again to this sæter.”

So saying, he gave her the hybrid plant his falcon eye had seen amid the tufts of gentian acaulis and saxifrages, — a marvel, brought to bloom by the breath of angels. With girlish eagerness Minna seized the tufted plant of transparent green, vivid as emerald, which was formed of little leaves rolled trumpet-wise, brown at the smaller end but changing tint by tint to their delicately notched edges, which were green. These leaves were so tightly pressed together that they seemed to blend and form a mat or cluster of rosettes. Here and there from this green ground rose pure white stars edged with a line of gold, and from their throats came crimson anthers but no pistils. A fragrance, blended of roses and of orange-blossoms, yet ethereal and fugitive, gave some-

thing as it were celestial to that mysterious flower, which Seraphitus sadly contemplated, as though it uttered plaintive thoughts which he alone could understand. But to Minna this mysterious phenomenon seemed a mere caprice of nature giving to stone the freshness, softness, and perfume of plants.

“Why do you call it matchless? can it not reproduce itself? she asked, looking at Seraphitus, who colored and turned away.

“Let us sit down,” he said presently; “look below you, Minna. See! At this height you will have no fear. The abyss is so far beneath us that we no longer have a sense of its depths; it acquires the perspective uniformity of ocean, the vagueness of clouds, the soft coloring of the sky. See, the ice of the fiord is a turquoise, the dark pine forests are mere threads of brown; for us all abysses should be thus adorned.”

Seraphitus said the words with that fervor of tone and gesture seen and known only by those who have ascended the highest mountains of the globe, — a fervor so involuntarily acquired that the haughtiest of men is forced to regard his guide as a brother, forgetting his own superior station till he descends to the valleys and the abodes of his kind. Seraphitus unfastened the skees from Minna’s feet, kneeling before her. The girl did not notice him, so absorbed was she in the marvellous view now offered of her native land, whose rocky outlines could here be seen at a glance. She felt, with deep emotion, the solemn permanence of those frozen summits, to which words could give no adequate utterance.

“We have not come here by human power alone,” she said, clasping her hands. “But perhaps I dream.”

“You think that facts the causes of which you cannot perceive are supernatural,” replied her companion.

“Your replies,” she said, “always bear the stamp of some deep thought. When I am near you I understand all things without an effort. Ah, I am free!”

“If so, you will not need your skees,” he answered.

“Oh!” she said; “I who would fain unfasten yours and kiss your feet!”

“Keep such words for Wilfrid,” said Seraphitus, gently.

“Wilfrid!” cried Minna angrily; then, softening as she glanced at her companion’s face and trying, but in vain, to take his hand, she added, “You are never angry, never; you are so hopelessly perfect in all things.”

“From which you conclude that I am unfeeling.”

Minna was startled at this lucid interpretation of her thought.

“You prove to me, at any rate, that we understand each other,” she said, with the grace of a loving woman.

Seraphitus softly shook his head and looked sadly and gently at her.

“You, who know all things,” said Minna, “tell me why it is that the timidity I felt below is over now that I have mounted higher. Why do I dare to look at you for the first time face to face, while lower down I scarcely dared to give a furtive glance?”

“Perhaps because we are withdrawn from the pettiness of earth,” he answered, unfastening his pelisse.

“Never, never have I seen you so beautiful!” cried Minna, sitting down on a mossy rock and losing herself in contemplation of the being who had now guided her to a part of the peak hitherto supposed to be inaccessible.

Never, in truth, had Seraphitus shone with so bright a radiance, — the only word that can render the illumination of his face and the aspect of his whole person. Was this splendor due to the lustre which the pure air of mountains and the reflections of the snow give to the complexion? Was it produced by the inward impulse which excites the body at the instant when exertion is arrested? Did it come from the sudden contrast between the glory of the sun and the darkness of the clouds, from whose shadow the charming couple had just emerged? Perhaps to all these causes we may add the effect of a phenomenon, one of the noblest which human nature has to offer. If some able physiologist had studied this being (who, judging by the pride on his brow and the lightning in his eyes seemed a youth of about seventeen years of age), and if the student had sought for the springs of that beaming life beneath the whitest skin that ever the North bestowed upon her offspring, he would undoubtedly have believed either in some phosphoric fluid of the nerves shining beneath the cuticle, or in the constant presence of an inward luminary, whose rays issued through the being of Seraphitus like a light through an alabaster vase. Soft and slen-

der as were his hands, ungloved to remove his companion's snow-shoes, they seemed possessed of a strength equal to that which the Creator gave to the diaphanous tentacles of the crab. The fire darting from his vivid glance seemed to struggle with the beams of the sun, not to take but to give them light. His body, slim and delicate as that of a woman, gave evidence of one of those natures which are feeble apparently, but whose strength equals their will, rendering them at times powerful. Of medium height, Seraphitus appeared to grow in stature as he turned fully round and seemed about to spring upward. His hair, curled by a fairy's hand and waving to the breeze, increased the illusion produced by this aerial attitude; yet his bearing, wholly without conscious effort, was the result far more of a moral phenomenon than of a corporal habit.

Minna's imagination seconded this illusion, under the dominion of which all persons would assuredly have fallen, — an illusion which gave to Seraphitus the appearance of a vision dreamed of in happy sleep. No known type conveys an image of that form so majestically male to Minna, but which to the eyes of a man would have eclipsed in womanly grace the fairest of Raphael's creations. That painter of heaven has ever put a tranquil joy, a loving sweetness, into the lines of his angelic conceptions; but what soul, unless it contemplated Seraphitus himself, could have conceived the ineffable emotions imprinted on his face? Who would have divined, even in the dreams of artists, where all things become possible, the shadow cast by

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some mysterious awe upon that brow, shining with intellect, which seemed to question Heaven and to pity Earth? The head hovered awhile disdainfully, as some majestic bird whose cries reverberate on the atmosphere, then bowed itself resignedly, like the turtledove uttering soft notes of tenderness in the depths of the silent woods. His complexion was of marvellous whiteness, which brought out vividly the coral lips, the brown eyebrows, and the silken lashes, the only colors that trenched upon the paleness of that face, whose perfect regularity did not detract from the grandeur of the sentiments expressed in it; nay, thought and emotion were reflected there, without hindrance or violence, with the majestic and natural gravity which we delight in attributing to superior beings. That face of purest marble expressed in all things strength and peace.

Minna rose to take the hand of Seraphitus, hoping thus to draw him to her, and to lay on that seductive brow a kiss given more from admiration than from love; but a glance at the young man's eyes, which pierced her as a ray of sunlight penetrates a prism, paralyzed the young girl. She felt, but without comprehending, a gulf between them; then she turned away her head and wept. Suddenly a strong hand seized her by the waist and a soft voice said to her: "Come!" She obeyed, resting her head, suddenly revived, upon the heart of her companion, who, regulating his step to hers with gentle and attentive conformity, led her to a spot whence they could see the radiant glories of the polar Nature.

“Before I look, before I listen to you, tell me, Seraphitus, why you repulse me. Have I displeased you? and how? tell me! I want nothing for myself; I would that all my earthly goods were yours, for the riches of my heart are yours already. I would that light came to my eyes only through your eyes just as my thought is born of your thought. I should not then fear to offend you, for I should give you back the echoes of your soul, the words of your heart, day by day, — as we render to God the meditations with which his spirit nourishes our minds. I would be thine alone.”

“Minna, a constant desire is that which shapes our future. Hope on! But if you would be pure in heart mingle the idea of the All-Powerful with your affections here below; then you will love all creatures, and your heart will rise to heights indeed.”

“I will do all you tell me,” she answered, lifting her eyes to his with a timid movement.

“I cannot be your companion,” said Seraphitus sadly.

He seemed to repress some thoughts, then stretched his arms towards Christiana, just visible like a speck on the horizon and said: —

“Look!”

“We are very small,” she said.

“Yes, but we become great through feeling and through intellect,” answered Seraphitus. “With us, and us alone, Minna, begins the knowledge of things; the little that we learn of the laws of the visible world

enables us to apprehend the immensity of the worlds invisible. I know not if the time has come to speak thus to you, but I would, ah, I would communicate to you the flame of my hopes! Perhaps we may one day be together in the world where Love never dies."

"Why not here and now?" she said, murmuring.

"Nothing is stable here," he said, disdainfully. "The passing joys of earthly love are gleams which reveal to certain souls the coming of joys more durable; just as the discovery of a single law of nature leads certain privileged beings to a conception of the system of the universe. Our fleeting happiness here below is the forerunning proof of another and a perfect happiness, just as the earth, a fragment of the world, attests the universe. We cannot measure the vast orbit of the Divine thought of which we are but an atom as small as God is great; but we can feel its vastness, we can kneel, adore, and wait. Men ever mislead themselves in science by not perceiving that all things on their globe are related and co-ordinated to the general evolution, to a constant movement and production which bring with them, necessarily, both advancement and an End. Man himself is not a finished creation; if he were, God would not Be."

"How is it that in thy short life thou hast found the time to learn so many things?" said the young girl.

"I remember," he replied.

"Thou art nobler than all else I see."

"We are the noblest of God's great works. Has He

not given us the faculty of reflecting on Nature; of gathering it within us by thought; of making it a footstool and stepping-stone from and by which to rise to Him? We love according to the greater or the lesser portion of heaven our souls contain. But do not be unjust, Minna; behold the magificence spread before you. Ocean expands at your feet like a carpet; the mountains resemble amphitheatres; heaven's ether is above them like the arching folds of a stage curtain. Here we may breathe the thoughts of God, as it were like a perfume. See! the angry billows which engulf the ships laden with men seem to us, where we are, mere bubbles; and if we raise our eyes and look above, all there is blue. Behold that diadem of stars! Here the tints of earthly impressions disappear; standing on this nature rarefied by space do you not feel within you something deeper far than mind, grander than enthusiasm, of greater energy than will? Are you not conscious of emotions whose interpretation is no longer in us? Do you not feel your pinions? Let us pray."

Seraphitus knelt down and crossed his hands upon his breast, while Minna fell, weeping, on her knees. Thus they remained for a time, while the azure dome above their heads grew larger and strong rays of light enveloped them without their knowledge.

"Why dost thou not weep when I weep?" said Minna, in a broken voice.

"They who are all spirit do not weep," replied Seraphitus rising; "Why should I weep? I see no longer

human wretchedness. Here, Good appears in all its majesty. There, beneath us, I hear the supplications and the wailings of that harp of sorrows which vibrates in the hands of captive souls. Here, I listen to the choir of harps harmonious. There, below, is hope, the glorious inception of faith; but here is faith — it reigns, hope realized!”

“You will never love me; I am too imperfect; you disdain me,” said the young girl.

“Minna, the violet hidden at the feet of the oak whispers to itself: ‘The sun does not love me; he comes not.’ The sun says: ‘If my rays shine upon her she will perish, poor flower.’ Friend of the flower, he sends his beams through the oak leaves, he veils, he tempers them, and thus they color the petals of his beloved. I have not veils enough, I fear lest you see me too closely; you would tremble if you knew me better. Listen: I have no taste for earthly fruits. Your joys, I know them all too well, and, like the sated emperors of pagan Rome, I have reached disgust of all things; I have received the gift of vision. Leave me! abandon me!” he murmured, sorrowfully.

Seraphitus turned and seated himself on a projecting rock, dropping his head upon his breast.

“Why do you drive me to despair?” said Minna.

“Go, go!” cried Seraphitus, “I have nothing that you want of me. Your love is too earthly for my love. Why do you not love Wilfrid? Wilfrid is a man, tested by passions; he would clasp you in his vigorous arms and make you feel a hand both broad and strong. His

hair is black, his eyes are full of human thoughts, his heart pours lava in every word he utters; he could kill you with caresses. Let him be your beloved, your husband! Yes, thine be Wilfrid!"

Minna wept aloud.

"Dare you say that you do not love him?" he went on, in a voice which pierced her like a dagger.

"Have mercy, have mercy, my Seraphitus!"

"Love him, poor child of Earth to which thy destiny has indissolubly bound thee," said the strange being, beckoning Minna by a gesture, and forcing her to the edge of the sæter, whence he pointed downward to a scene that might well inspire a young girl full of enthusiasm with the fancy that she stood above this earth.

"I longed for a companion to the kingdom of Light; I wished to show you that morsel of mud, I find you bound to it. Farewell. Remain on earth; enjoy through the senses; obey your nature; turn pale with pallid men; blush with women; sport with children; pray with the guilty; raise your eyes to heaven when sorrows overtake you; tremble, hope, throb in all your pulses; you will have a companion; you can laugh and weep, and give and receive. I, — I am an exile, far from heaven; a monster, far from earth. I live of myself and by myself. I feel by the spirit; I breathe through my brow; I see by thought; I die of impatience and of longing. No one here below can fulfil my desires or calm my griefs. I have forgotten how to weep. I am alone. I resign myself, and I wait."

Seraphitus looked at the flowery mound on which he had seated Minna; then he turned and faced the frowning heights, whose pinnacles were wrapped in clouds; to them he cast, unspoken, the remainder of his thoughts.

“Minna, do you hear those delightful strains?” he said after a pause, with the voice of a dove, for the eagle’s cry was hushed; “it is like the music of those Eolian harps your poets hang in forests and on the mountains. Do you see the shadowy figures passing among the clouds, the wingèd feet of those who are making ready the gifts of heaven? They bring refreshment to the soul; the skies are about to open and shed the flowers of spring upon the earth. See, a gleam is darting from the pole. Let us fly, let us fly! It is time we go!”

In a moment their skees were refastened, and the pair descended the Falberg by the steep slopes which join the mountain to the valleys of the Sieg. Miraculous perception guided their course, or, to speak more properly, their flight. When fissures covered with snow intercepted them, Seraphitus caught Minna in his arms and darted with rapid motion, lightly as a bird, over the crumbling causeways of the abyss. Sometimes, while propelling his companion, he deviated to the right or left to avoid a precipice, a tree, a projecting rock, which he seemed to see beneath the snow, as an old sailor, familiar with the ocean, discerns the hidden reefs by the color, the trend, or the eddying of the water. When they reached the paths of the

Siegdahlen, where they could fearlessly follow a straight line to regain the ice of the fiord, Seraphitus stopped Minna.

“You have nothing to say to me?” he asked.

“I thought you would rather think alone,” she answered respectfully.

“Let us hasten, Minette; it is almost night,” he said.

Minna quivered as she heard the voice, now so changed, of her guide, — a pure voice, like that of a young girl, which dissolved the fantastic dream through which she had been passing. Seraphitus seemed to be laying aside his male force and the too keen intellect that flamed from his eyes. Presently the charming pair glided across the fiord and reached the snow-field which divides the shore from the first range of houses; then, hurrying forward as daylight faded, they sprang up the hill toward the parsonage, as though they were mounting the steps of a great staircase.

“My father must be anxious,” said Minna.

“No,” answered Seraphitus.

As he spoke the couple reached the porch of the humble dwelling where Monsieur Becker, the pastor of Jarvis, sat reading while awaiting his daughter for the evening meal.

“Dear Monsieur Becker,” said Seraphitus, “I have brought Minna back to you safe and sound.”

“Thank you, mademoiselle,” said the old man, laying his spectacles on his book; “you must be very tired.”

“ Oh, no,” said Minna, and as she spoke she felt the soft breath of her companion on her brow.

“ Dear heart, will you come day after to-morrow evening and take tea with me?”

“ Gladly, dear.”

“ Monsieur Becker, you will bring her, will you not?”

“ Yes, mademoiselle.”

Seraphitus inclined his head with a pretty gesture, and bowed to the old pastor as he left the house. A few moments later he reached the great courtyard of the Swedish villa. An old servant, over eighty years of age, appeared in the portico bearing a lantern. Seraphitus slipped off his snow-shoes with the graceful dexterity of a woman, then darting into the salon he fell exhausted and motionless on a wide divan covered with furs.

“ What will you take?” asked the old man, lighting the immensely tall wax-candles that are used in Norway.

“ Nothing, David, I am too weary.”

Seraphitus unfastened his pelisse lined with sable, threw it over him, and fell asleep. The old servant stood for several minutes gazing with loving eyes at the singular being before him, whose sex it would have been difficult for any one at that moment to determine. Wrapped as he was in a formless garment, which resembled equally a woman's robe and a man's mantle, it was impossible not to fancy that the slender feet which hung at the side of the couch were those of a

woman, and equally impossible not to note how the forehead and the outlines of the head gave evidence of power brought to its highest pitch.

“She suffers, and she will not tell me,” thought the old man. “She is dying, like a flower wilted by the burning sun.”

And the old man wept.

II.

SERAPHITA.

LATER in the evening David re-entered the salon.

“I know who it is you have come to announce,” said Seraphita in a sleepy voice. “Wilfrid may enter.”

Hearing these words a man suddenly presented himself, crossed the room and sat down beside her.

“My dear Seraphita, are you ill?” he said. “You look paler than usual.”

She turned slowly towards him, tossing back her hair like a pretty woman whose aching head leaves her no strength even for complaint.

“I was foolish enough to cross the fiord with Minna,” she said. “We ascended the Falberg.”

“Do you mean to kill yourself?” he said with a lover’s terror.

“No, my good Wilfrid; I took the greatest care of your Minna.”

Wilfrid struck his hand violently on a table, rose hastily, and made several steps towards the door with an exclamation full of pain; then he returned and seemed about to remonstrate.

“Why this disturbance if you think me ill?” she said.

“Forgive me, have mercy!” he cried, kneeling beside her. “Speak to me harshly if you will; exact all that the cruel fancies of a woman lead you to imagine I least can bear; but oh, my beloved, do not doubt my love. You take Minna like an axe to hew me down. Have mercy!”

“Why do you say these things, my friend, when you know that they are useless?” she replied, with a look which grew in the end so soft that Wilfrid ceased to behold her eyes, but saw in their place a fluid light, the shimmer of which was like the last vibrations of an Italian song.

“Ah! no man dies of anguish!” he murmured.

“You are suffering?” she said in a voice whose intonations produced upon his heart the same effect as that of her look. “Would I could help you!”

“Love me as I love you.”

“Poor Minna!” she replied.

“Why am I unarmed!” exclaimed Wilfrid, violently.

“You are out of temper,” said Seraphita, smiling. “Come, have I not spoken to you like those Parisian women whose loves you tell of?”

Wilfrid sat down, crossed his arms, and looked gloomily at Seraphita. “I forgive you,” he said; “for you know not what you do.”

“You mistake,” she replied; “every woman from the days of Eve does good and evil knowingly.”

“I believe it;” he said.

“I am sure of it, Wilfrid. Our instinct is precisely that which makes us perfect. What you men learn, we feel.”

“Why, then, do you not feel how much I love you?”

“Because you do not love me.”

“Good God!”

“If you did, would you complain of your own sufferings?”

“You are terrible to-night, Seraphita. You are a demon.”

“No, but I am gifted with the faculty of comprehending, and it is awful. Wilfrid, sorrow is a lamp which illumines life.”

“Why did you ascend the Falberg?”

“Minna will tell you. I am too weary to talk. You must talk to me, — you who know so much, who have learned all things and forgotten nothing; you who have passed through every social test. Talk to me, amuse me, I am listening.”

“What can I tell you that you do not know? Besides, the request is ironical. You allow yourself no intercourse with social life; you trample on its conventions, its laws, its customs, sentiments, and sciences; you reduce them all to the proportions such things take when viewed by you beyond this universe.”

“Therefore you see, my friend, that I am not a woman. You do wrong to love me. What! am I to leave the ethereal regions of my pretended strength, make myself humbly small, cringe like the hapless females of all species, that you may lift me up? and then, when I, helpless and broken, ask you for help, when I need your arm, you will repulse me! No, we can never come to terms.”

“You are more maliciously unkind to-night than I have ever known you.”

“Unkind!” she said, with a look which seemed to blend all feelings into one celestial emotion, “no, I am ill, I suffer, that is all. Leave me, my friend; it is your manly right. We women should ever please you, entertain you, be gay in your presence and have no whims save those that amuse you. Come, what shall I do for you, friend? Shall I sing, shall I dance, though weariness deprives me of the use of voice and limbs?—Ah! gentlemen, be we on our deathbeds, we yet must smile to please you; you call that, methinks, your right. Poor women! I pity them. Tell me, you who abandon them when they grow old, is it because they have neither hearts nor souls? Wilfred, I am a hundred years old; leave me! leave me! go to Minna!”

“Oh, my eternal love!”

“Do you know the meaning of eternity? Be silent, Wilfrid. You desire me, but you do not love me. Tell me, do I not seem to you like those coquettish Parisian women?”

“Certainly I no longer find you the pure celestial maiden I first saw in the church of Jarvis.”

At these words Seraphita passed her hands across her brow, and when she removed them Wilfrid was amazed at the saintly expression that overspread her face.

“You are right, my friend,” she said; “I do wrong whenever I set my feet upon your earth.”

“Oh, Seraphita, be my star! stay where you can ever bless me with that clear light!”

As he spoke, he stretched forth his hand to take that of the young girl, but she withdrew it, neither disdainfully nor in anger. Wilfrid rose abruptly and walked to the window that she might not see the tears that rose to his eyes.

“Why do you weep?” she said. “You are not a child, Wilfrid. Come back to me. I wish it. You are annoyed if I show just displeasure. You see that I am fatigued and ill, yet you force me to think and speak, and listen to persuasions and ideas that weary me. If you had any real perception of my nature, you would have made some music, you would have lulled my feelings — but no, you love me for yourself and not for myself.”

The storm which convulsed the young man’s heart calmed down at these words. He slowly approached her, letting his eyes take in the seductive creature who lay exhausted before him, her head resting in her hand and her elbow on the couch.

“You think that I do not love you,” she resumed. “You are mistaken. Listen to me, Wilfrid. You are beginning to know much; you have suffered much. Let me explain your thoughts to you. You wished to take my hand just now;” she rose to a sitting posture, and her graceful motions seemed to emit light. “When a young girl allows her hand to be taken it is as though she made a promise, is it not? and ought she not to fulfil it? You well know that I cannot be yours,

Two sentiments divide and inspire the love of all the women of the earth. Either they devote themselves to suffering, degraded, and criminal beings whom they desire to console, uplift, redeem; or they give themselves to superior men, sublime and strong, whom they adore and seek to comprehend, and by whom they are often annihilated. You have been degraded, though now you are purified by the fires of repentance, and to-day you are once more noble; but I know myself too feeble to be your equal, and too religious to bow before any power but that On High. I may refer thus to your life, my friend, for we are in the North, among the clouds, where all things are abstractions."

"You stab me, Seraphita, when you speak like this. It wounds me to hear you apply the dreadful knowledge with which you strip from all things human the properties that time and space and form have given them, and consider them mathematically in the abstract, as geometry treats substances from which it extracts solidity."

"Well, I will respect your wishes, Wilfrid. Let the subject drop. Tell me what you think of this bearskin rug which my poor David has spread out."

"It is very handsome."

"Did you ever see me wear this *doucha greka*?"

She pointed to a pelisse made of cashmere and lined with the skin of the black fox, — the name she gave it signifying "warm to the soul."

"Do you believe that any sovereign has a fur that can equal it?" she asked.

“It is worthy of her who wears it.”

“And whom you think beautiful?”

“Human words do not apply to her. Heart to heart is the only language I can use.”

“Wilfred, you are kind to soothe my griefs with such sweet words — which you have said to others.”

“Farewell!”

“Stay. I love both you and Minna, believe me. To me you two are as one being. United thus you can be my brother or, if you will, my sister. Marry her; let me see you both happy before I leave this world of trial and of pain. My God! the simplest of women obtain what they ask of a lover; they whisper ‘Hush!’ and he is silent; ‘Die’ and he dies; ‘Love me afar’ and he stays at a distance, like courtiers before a king! All I desire is to see you happy, and you refuse me! Am I then powerless? — Wilfred, listen, come nearer to me. Yes, I should grieve to see you marry Minna but — when I am here no longer, then — promise me to marry her; heaven destined you for each other.”

“I listen to you with fascination, Seraphita. Your words are incomprehensible, but they charm me. What is it you mean to say?”

“You are right; I forget to be foolish, — to be the poor creature whose weaknesses gratify you. I torment you, Wilfrid. You came to these Northern lands for rest, you, worn-out by the impetuous struggle of genius unrecognized, you, weary with the patient toils of science, you, who well-nigh dyed your hands in crime and wore the fetters of human justice —”

Wilfred dropped speechless on the carpet. Seraphita breathed softly on his forehead, and in a moment he fell asleep at her feet.

“Sleep! rest!” she said, rising.

She passed her hands over Wilfred’s brow; then the following sentences escaped her lips, one by one, — all different in tone and accent, but all melodious, full of a Goodness that seemed to emanate from her head in vaporous waves, like the gleams the goddess chastely lays upon Endymion sleeping.

“I cannot show myself such as I am to thee, dear Wilfred, — to thee who art strong.

“The hour is come; the hour when the effulgent lights of the future cast their reflections backward on the soul; the hour when the soul awakes into freedom.

“Now am I permitted to tell thee how I love thee. Dost thou not see the nature of my love, a love without self-interest; a sentiment full of thee, thee only; a love which follows thee into the future to light that future for thee — for it is the one True Light. Canst thou now conceive with what ardor I would have thee leave this life which weighs thee down, and behold thee nearer than thou art to that world where Love is never-failing? Can it be aught but suffering to love for one life only? Hast thou not felt a thirst for the eternal love? Dost thou not feel the bliss to which a creature rises when, with twin-soul, it loves the Being who betrays not love, Him before whom we kneel in adoration?

“Would I had wings to cover thee, Wilfred; power to give thee strength to enter now into that world where

all the purest joys of purest earthly attachments are but shadows in the Light that shines, unceasing, to illumine and rejoice all hearts.

“Forgive a friendly soul for showing thee the picture of thy sins, in the charitable hope of soothing the sharp pangs of thy remorse. Listen to the pardoning choir; refresh thy soul in the dawn now rising for thee beyond the night of death. Yes, thy life, thy true life is there!

“May my words now reach thee clothed in the glorious forms of dreams; may they deck themselves with images glowing and radiant as they hover round you. Rise, rise, to the height where men can see themselves distinctly, pressed together though they be like grains of sand upon a sea-shore. Humanity rolls out like a many-colored ribbon. See the diverse shades of that flower of the celestial gardens. Behold the beings who lack intelligence, those who begin to receive it, those who have passed through trials, those who love, those who follow wisdom and aspire to the regions of Light!

“Canst thou comprehend, through this thought made visible, the destiny of humanity? — whence it came, whither it goeth? Continue steadfast in the Path. Reaching the end of thy journey thou shalt hear the clarions of omnipotence sounding the cries of victory in chords of which a single one would shake the earth, but which are lost in the spaces of a world that hath neither east nor west.

“Canst thou comprehend, my poor beloved Tried-one,

that unless the torpor and the veils of sleep had wrapped thee, such sights would rend and bear away thy mind as the whirlwinds rend and carry into space the feeble sails, depriving thee forever of thy reason? Dost thou understand that the Soul itself, raised to its utmost power can scarcely endure in dreams the burning communications of the Spirit?

“Speed thy way through the luminous spheres; behold, admire, hasten! Flying thus thou canst pause or advance without weariness. Like other men, thou wouldst fain be plunged forever in these spheres of light and perfume where now thou art, free of thy swooning body, and where thy thought alone has utterance. Fly! enjoy for a fleeting moment the wings thou shalt surely win when Love has grown so perfect in thee that thou hast no senses left; when thy whole being is all mind, all love. The higher thy flight the less canst thou see the abysses. There are none in heaven. Look at the friend who speaks to thee; she who holds thee above this earth in which are all abysses. Look, behold, contemplate me yet a moment longer, for never again wilt thou see me, save imperfectly as the pale twilight of this world may show me to thee.”

Seraphita stood erect, her head with floating hair inclining gently forward, in that aerial attitude which great painters give to messengers from heaven; the folds of her raiment fell with the same unspeakable grace which holds an artist — the man who translates all things into sentiment — before the exquisite well-known lines of Polyhymnia’s veil. Then she stretched forth her

hand. Wilfrid rose. When he looked at Seraphita she was lying on the bear's-skin, her head resting on her hand, her face calm, her eyes brilliant. Wilfrid gazed at her silently; but his face betrayed a deferential fear in its almost timid expression.

"Yes, dear," he said at last, as though he were answering some question; "we are separated by worlds. I resign myself; I can only adore you. But what will become of me, poor and alone!"

"Wilfrid, you have Minna."

He shook his head.

"Do not be so disdainful: woman understands all things through love; what she does not understand she feels; what she does not feel she sees; when she neither sees, nor feels, nor understands, this angel of earth divines to protect you, and hides her protection beneath the grace of love."

"Seraphita, am I worthy to belong to a woman?"

"Ah, now," she said, smiling, "you are suddenly very modest; is it a snare? A woman is always so touched to see her weakness glorified. Well, come and take tea with me the day after to-morrow evening; good Monsieur Becker will be here, and Minna, the purest and most artless creature I have known on earth. Leave me now, my friend; I need to make long prayers and expiate my sins."

"You, can you commit sin?"

"Poor friend! if we abuse our power, is not that the sin of pride? I have been very proud to-day. Now leave me, till to-morrow."

“Till to-morrow,” said Wilfrid faintly, casting a long glance at the being of whom he desired to carry with him an ineffaceable memory.

Though he wished to go far away, he was held, as it were, outside the house for some moments, watching the light which shone from all the windows of the Swedish dwelling.

“What is the matter with me?” he asked himself. “No, she is not a mere creature, but a whole creation. Of her world, even through veils and clouds, I have caught echoes like the memory of sufferings healed, like the dazzling vertigo of dreams in which we hear the plaints of generations mingling with the harmonies of some higher sphere where all is Light and all is Love. Am I awake? Do I still sleep? Are these the eyes before which the luminous space retreated further and further indefinitely while the eyes followed it? The night is cold, yet my head is fire. I will go to the parsonage. With the pastor and his daughter I shall recover the balance of my mind.”

But still he did not leave the spot whence his eyes could plunge into Seraphita’s salon. The mysterious creature seemed to him the radiating centre of a luminous circle which formed an atmosphere about her wider than that of other beings; whoever entered it felt the compelling influence of, as it were, a vortex of dazzling light and all consuming thoughts. Forced to struggle against this inexplicable power, Wilfrid only prevailed after strong efforts; but when he reached and passed the inclosing wall of the courtyard, he regained

his freedom of will, walked rapidly towards the parsonage, and was soon beneath the high wooden arch which formed a sort of peristyle to Monsieur Becker's dwelling. He opened the first door, against which the wind had driven the snow, and knocked on the inner one, saying:—

“Will you let me spend the evening with you, Monsieur Becker?”

“Yes,” cried two voices, mingling their intonations.

Entering the parlor, Wilfrid returned by degrees to real life. He bowed affectionately to Minna, shook hands with Monsieur Becker, and looked about at the picture of a home which calmed the convulsions of his physical nature, in which a phenomenon was taking place analogous to that which sometimes seizes upon men who have given themselves up to protracted contemplations. If some strong thought bears upward on phantasmal wing a man of learning or a poet, isolates him from the external circumstances which environ him here below, and leads him forward through illimitable regions where vast arrays of facts become abstractions, where the greatest works of Nature are but images, then woe betide him if a sudden noise strikes sharply on his senses and calls his errant soul back to its prison-house of flesh and bones. The shock of the reunion of these two powers, body and mind, — one of which partakes of the unseen qualities of a thunderbolt, while the other shares with sentient nature that soft resistant force which defies destruction, — this shock, this struggle, or, rather let us say, this painful

meeting and co-mingling, gives rise to frightful sufferings. The body receives back the flame that consumes it; the flame has once more grasped its prey. This fusion, however, does not take place without convulsions, explosions, tortures; analogous and visible signs of which may be seen in chemistry, when two antagonistic substances which science has united separate.

For the last few days whenever Wilfrid entered Seraphita's presence his body seemed to fall away from him into nothingness. With a single glance this strange being led him in spirit through the spheres where meditation leads the learned man, prayer the pious heart, where vision transports the artist, and sleep the souls of men, — each and all have their own path to the Height, their own guide to reach it, their own individual sufferings in the dire return. In that sphere alone all veils are rent away, and the revelation, the awful flaming certainty of an unknown world, of which the soul brings back mere fragments to this lower sphere, stands revealed. To Wilfrid one hour passed with Seraphita was like the sought-for dreams of Theriakis, in which each knot of nerves becomes the centre of a radiating delight. But he left her bruised and wearied as some young girl endeavoring to keep step with a giant.

The cold air, with its stinging flagellations, had begun to still the nervous tremors which followed the reunion of his two natures, so powerfully disunited for a time; he was drawn towards the parsonage, then towards Minna, by the sight of the every-day home life for which he thirsted as the wandering European thirsts for his

native land when nostalgia seizès him amid the fairy scenes of Orient that have seduced his senses. More weary than he had ever yet been, Wilfrid dropped into a chair and looked about him for a time, like a man who awakes from sleep. Monsieur Becker and his daughter accustomed, perhaps, to the apparent eccentricity of their guest, continued the employments in which they were engaged.

The parlor was ornamented with a collection of the shells and insects of Norway. These curiosities, admirably arranged on a background of the yellow pine which panelled the room, formed, as it were, a rich tapestry to which the fumes of tobacco had imparted a mellow tone. At the further end of the room, opposite to the door, was an immense wrought-iron stove, carefully polished by the serving-woman till it shone like burnished steel. Seated in a large tapestried armchair near the stove, before a table, with his feet in a species of muff, Monsieur Becker was reading a folio volume which was propped against a pile of other books as on a desk. At his left stood a jug of beer and a glass, at his right burned a smoky lamp fed by some species of fish-oil. The pastor seemed about sixty years of age. His face belonged to a type often painted by Rembrandt; the same small bright eyes, set in wrinkles and surmounted by thick gray eyebrows; the same white hair escaping in snowy flakes from a black velvet cap; the same broad, bald brow, and a contour of face which the ample chin made almost square; and lastly, the same calm tranquillity, which, to an observer, denoted

the possession of some inward power, be it the supremacy bestowed by money, or the magisterial influence of the burgomaster, or the consciousness of art, or the cubic force of blissful ignorance. This fine old man, whose stout body proclaimed his vigorous health, was wrapped in a dressing-gown of rough gray cloth plainly bound. Between his lips was a meerschaum pipe, from which, at regular intervals, he blew the smoke, following with abstracted vision its fantastic wreathings, — his mind employed, no doubt, in assimilating through some meditative process the thoughts of the author whose works he was studying.

On the other side of the stove and near a door which communicated with the kitchen Minna was indistinctly visible in the haze of the good man's smoke, to which she was apparently accustomed. Beside her on a little table were the implements of household work, a pile of napkins, and another of socks waiting to be mended, also a lamp like that which shone on the white page of the book in which the pastor was absorbed. Her fresh young face, with its delicate outline, expressed an infinite purity which harmonized with the candor of the white brow and the clear blue eyes. She sat erect, turning slightly toward the lamp for better light, unconsciously showing as she did so the beauty of her waist and bust. She was already dressed for the night in a long robe of white cotton; a cambric cap, without other ornament than a frill of the same, confined her hair. Though evidently plunged in some inward meditation, she counted without a mistake the threads of her

napkins or the meshes of her socks. Sitting thus, she presented the most complete image, the truest type, of the woman destined for terrestrial labor, whose glance may pierce the clouds of the sanctuary while her thought, humble and charitable, keeps her ever on the level of man.

Wilfrid had flung himself into a chair between the two tables and was contemplating with a species of intoxication this picture full of harmony, to which the clouds of smoke did no despite. The single window which lighted the parlor during the fine weather was now carefully closed. An old tapestry, used for a curtain and fastened to a stick, hung before it in heavy folds. Nothing in the room was picturesque, nothing brilliant; everything denoted rigorous simplicity, true heartiness, the ease of unconventional nature, and the habits of a domestic life which knew neither cares nor troubles. Many a dwelling is like a dream, the sparkle of passing pleasure seems to hide some ruin beneath the cold smile of luxury; but this parlor, sublime in reality, harmonious in tone, diffused the patriarchal ideas of a full and self-contained existence. The silence was unbroken save by the movements of the servant in the kitchen engaged in preparing the supper, and by the sizzling of the dried fish which she was frying in salt butter according to the custom of the country.

“Will you smoke a pipe?” said the pastor, seizing a moment when he thought that Wilfrid might listen to him.

“Thank you, no, dear Monsieur Becker,” replied the visitor.

“You seem to suffer more to-day than usual,” said Minna, struck by the feeble tones of the stranger’s voice.

“I am always so when I leave the château.”

Minna quivered.

“A strange being lives there, Monsieur Becker,” he continued after a pause. “For the six months that I have been in this village I have never yet dared to question you about her, and even now I do violence to my feelings in speaking of her. I began by keenly regretting that my journey in this country was arrested by the winter weather and that I was forced to remain here. But during the last two months chains have been forged and riveted which bind me irrevocably to Jarvis, till now I fear to end my days here. You know how I first met Seraphita, what impression her look and voice made upon me, and how at last I was admitted to her home where she receives no one. From the very first day I have longed to ask you the history of this mysterious being. On that day began, for me, a series of enchantments.”

“Enchantments!” cried the pastor shaking the ashes of his pipe into an earthen-ware dish full of sand, “are there enchantments in these days?”

“You, who are carefully studying at this moment that volume of the ‘Incantations’ of Jean Wier, will surely understand the explanation of my sensations if I try to give it to you,” replied Wilfrid. “If we study Nature attentively in its great evolutions as in its minutest works, we cannot fail to recognize the pos-

sibility of enchantment — giving to that word its exact significance. Man does not create forces ; he employs the only force that exists and which includes all others namely Motion, the breath incomprehensible of the sovereign Maker of the universe. Species are too distinctly separated for the human hand to mingle them. The only miracle of which man is capable is done through the conjunction of two antagonistic substances. Gunpowder for instance is germane to a thunderbolt. As to calling forth a creation, and a sudden one, all creation demands time, and time neither recedes nor advances at the word of command. So, in the world without us, plastic nature obeys laws the order and exercise of which cannot be interfered with by the hand of man. But after fulfilling, as it were, the function of Matter, it would be unreasonable not to recognize within us the existence of a gigantic power, the effects of which are so incommensurable that the known generations of men have never yet been able to classify them. I do not speak of man's faculty of abstraction, of constraining Nature to confine itself within the Word, — a gigantic act on which the common mind reflects as little as it does on the nature of Motion, but which, nevertheless, has led the Indian theosophists to explain creation by a word to which they give an inverse power. The smallest atom of their subsistence, namely, the grain of rice, from which a creation issues and in which alternately creation again is held, presented to their minds so perfect an image of the creative word, and

of the abstractive word, that to them it was easy to apply the same system to the creation of worlds. The majority of men content themselves with the grain of rice sown in the first chapter of all the Gencses. Saint John, when he said the Word was God only complicated the difficulty. But the fructification, germination, and efflorescence of our ideas is of little consequence if we compare that property, shared by many men, with the wholly individual faculty of communicating to that property, by some mysterious concentration, forces that are more or less active, of carrying it up to a third, a ninth, or a twenty-seventh power, of making it thus fasten upon the masses and obtain magical results by condensing the processes of nature.

“What I mean by enchantments,” continued Wilfrid after a moment’s pause, “are those stupendous actions taking place between two membranes in the tissue of the brain. We find in the unexplorable nature of the Spiritual World certain beings armed with these wondrous faculties, comparable only to the terrible power of certain gases in the physical world, beings who combine with other beings, penetrate them as active agents, and produce upon them witchcrafts, charms, against which these helpless slaves are wholly defenceless; they are, in fact, enchanted, brought under subjection, reduced to a condition of dreadful vassalage. Such mysterious beings overpower others with the sceptre and the glory of a superior nature, — acting upon them at times like the torpedo which electrifies or paralyzes the fisherman, at other times like a dose of phosphorus

which stimulates life and accelerates its propulsion; or again, like opium, which puts to sleep corporeal nature, disengages the spirit from every bond, enables it to float above the world and shows this earth to the spiritual eye as through a prism, extracting from it the food most needed; or, yet again, like catalepsy, which deadens all faculties for the sake of one only vision. Miracles, enchantments, incantations, witchcrafts, spells, and charms, in short, all those acts improperly termed supernatural, are only possible and can only be explained by the despotism with which some spirit compels us to feel the effects of a mysterious optic which increases, or diminishes, or exalts creation, moves within us as it pleases, deforms or embellishes all things to our eyes, tears us from heaven, or drags us to hell, — two terms by which men agree to express the two extremes of joy and misery.

“These phenomena are within us, not without us,” Wilfrid went on. “The being whom we call Seraphita seems to me one of those rare and terrible spirits to whom power is given to bind men, to crush nature, to enter into participation of the occult power of God. The course of her enchantments over me began on that first day, when silence as to her was imposed upon me against my will. Each time that I have wished to question you it seemed as though I were about to reveal a secret of which I ought to be the incorruptible guardian. Whenever I have tried to speak, a burning seal has been laid upon my lips, and I myself have become

the involuntary minister of these mysteries. You see me here to-night, for the hundredth time, bruised, defeated, broken, after leaving the hallucinating sphere which surrounds that young girl, so gentle, so fragile to both of you, but to me the cruellest of magicians! Yes, to me she is like a sorcerer holding in her right hand the invisible wand that moves the globe, and in her left the thunderbolt that rends asunder all things at her will. No longer can I look upon her brow; the light of it is insupportable. I skirt the borders of the abyss of madness too closely to be longer silent. I must speak. I seize this moment, when courage comes to me, to resist the power which drags me onward without inquiring whether or not I have the force to follow. Who is she? Did you know her young? What of her birth? Had she father and mother, or was she born of the conjunction of ice and sun? She burns and yet she freezes; she shows herself and then withdraws; she attracts me and repulses me; she brings me life, she gives me death; I love her and yet I hate her! I cannot live thus; let me be wholly in heaven or in hell!"

Holding his refilled pipe in one hand, and in the other the cover which he forgot to replace, Monsieur Becker listened to Wilfrid with a mysterious expression on his face, looking occasionally at his daughter, who seemed to understand the man's language as in harmony with the strange being who inspired it. Wilfrid was splendid to behold at this moment, — like Hamlet listening to the ghost of his father as it rises for him alone in the midst of the living.

“This is certainly the language of a man in love,” said the good pastor, innocently.

“In love!” cried Wilfrid, “yes, to common minds. But, dear Monsieur Becker, no words can express the frenzy which draws me to the feet of that unearthly being.”

“Then you do love her?” said Minna, in a tone of reproach.

“Mademoiselle, I feel such extraordinary agitation when I see her, and such deep sadness when I see her no more, that in any other man what I feel would be called love. But that sentiment draws those who feel it ardently together, whereas between her and me a great gulf lies, whose icy coldness penetrates my very being in her presence; though the feeling dies away when I see her no longer. I leave her in despair; I return to her with ardor, — like men of science who seek a secret from Nature only to be baffled, or like the painter who would fain put life upon his canvas and strives with all the resources of his art in the vain attempt.”

“Monsieur, all that you say is true,” replied the young girl, artlessly.

“How can you know, Minna?” asked the old pastor.

“Ah! my father, had you been with us this morning on the summit of the Falberg, had you seen him praying, you would not ask me that question. You would say, like Monsieur Wilfrid, when he saw his Seraphita for the first time in our temple, ‘It is the Spirit of Prayer.’”

These words were followed by a moment's silence.

"Ah, truly!" said Wilfrid, "she has nothing in common with the creatures who grovel upon this earth."

"On the Falberg!" said the old pastor, "how could you get there?"

"I do not know," replied Minna; "the way is like a dream to me, of which no more than a memory remains. Perhaps I should hardly believe that I had been there were it not for this tangible proof."

She drew the flower from her bosom and showed it to them. All three gazed at the pretty saxifrage, which was still fresh, and now shone in the light of the two lamps like a third luminary.

"This is indeed supernatural," said the old man, astounded at the sight of a flower blooming in winter.

"A mystery!" cried Wilfrid, intoxicated with its perfume.

"The flower makes me giddy," said Minna; "I fancy I still hear that voice, — the music of thought; that I still see the light of that look, which is Love."

"I implore you, my dear Monsieur Becker, tell me the history of Seraphita, — enigmatical human flower, — whose image is before us in this mysterious bloom."

"My dear friend," said the old man, emitting a puff of smoke, "to explain the birth of that being it is absolutely necessary that I disperse the clouds which envelop the most obscure of Christian doctrines. It is not easy to make myself clear when speaking of that incomprehensible revelation, — the last effulgence of

faith that has shone upon our lump of mud. Do you know Swedenborg?"

"By name only, — of him, of his books and his religion I know nothing."

"Then I must relate to you the whole chronicle of Swedenborg."

III.

SERAPHITA-SERAPHITUS.

AFTER a pause, during which the pastor seemed to be gathering his recollections, he continued in the following words: —

“Emanuel Swedenborg was born at Upsala in Sweden, in the month of January, 1688, according to various authors, — in 1689, according to his epitaph. His father was Bishop of Skara. Swedenborg lived eighty-five years; his death occurred in London, March 29, 1772. I use that term to convey the idea of a simple change of state. According to his disciples, Swedenborg was seen at Jarvis and in Paris after that date. Allow me, my dear Monsieur Wilfrid,” said Monsieur Becker, making a gesture to prevent all interruption, “I relate these facts without either affirming or denying them. Listen; afterwards you can think and say what you like. I will inform you when I judge, criticise, and discuss these doctrines, so as to keep clearly in view my own intellectual neutrality between HIM and Reason.

“The life of Swedenborg was divided into two parts,” continued the pastor. “From 1688 to 1745 Baron Emanuel Swedenborg appeared in the world as a man of vast learning, esteemed and cherished for his virtues, always irreproachable and constantly useful. While fulfilling

high public functions in Sweden, he published, between 1709 and 1740, several important works on mineralogy, physics, mathematics, and astronomy, which enlightened the world of learning. He originated a method of building docks suitable for the reception of large vessels, and he wrote many treatises on various important questions, such as the rise of tides, the theory of the magnet and its qualities, the motion and position of the earth and planets, and, while Assessor in the Royal College of Mines, on the proper system of working salt mines. He discovered means to construct canal-locks or sluices; and he also discovered and applied the simplest methods of extracting ore and of working metals. In fact, he studied no science without advancing it. In youth he learned Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, also the oriental languages, with which he became so familiar that many distinguished scholars consulted him, and he was able to decipher the vestiges of the oldest known books of Scripture, namely: 'The Wars of Jehovah' and 'The Enunciations,' spoken of by Moses (Numbers xxi. 14, 15, 27-30), also by Joshua, Jeremiah, and Samuel, — 'The Wars of Jehovah' being the historical part and 'The Enunciations' the prophetic part of the Mosaic Books anterior to Genesis. Swedenborg even affirms that 'the Book of Jasher,' the Book of the Righteous, mentioned by Joshua, was in existence in Eastern Tartary, together with the doctrine of Correspondences. A Frenchman has lately, so they tell me, justified these statements of Swedenborg, by the discovery at Bagdad of several portions of the Bible

hitherto unknown in Europe. During the widespread discussion on animal magnetism which took its rise in Paris, and in which most men of Western science took an active part about the year 1785, Monsieur le Marquis de Thomé vindicated the memory of Swedenborg by calling attention to certain assertions made by the Commission appointed by the King of France to investigate the subject. These gentlemen declared that no theory of magnetism existed, whereas Swedenborg had studied and promulged it ever since the year 1720. Monsieur de Thomé seized this opportunity to show the reason why so many men of science relegated Swedenborg to oblivion while they delved into his treasure-house and took his facts to aid their work. 'Some of the most illustrious of these men,' said Monsieur de Thomé, alluding to the 'Theory of the Earth' by Buffon, 'have had the meanness to wear the plumage of the noble bird and refuse him all acknowledgment ;' and he proved, by masterly quotations drawn from the encyclopædic works of Swedenborg, that the great prophet had anticipated by over a century the slow march of human science. It suffices to read his philosophical and mineralogical works to be convinced of this. In one passage he is seen as the precursor of modern chemistry by the announcement that the productions of organized nature are decomposable and resolve into two simple principles ; also that water, air, and fire are *not elements*. In another, he goes in a few words to the heart of magnetic mysteries and deprives Mesmer of the honors of a first knowledge of them.

“ There,” said Monsieur Becker, pointing to a long shelf against the wall between the stove and the window on which were ranged books of all sizes, “ behold him ! here are seventeen works from his pen, of which one, his ‘ Philosophical and Mineralogical Works,’ published in 1734, is in three folio volumes. These productions, which prove the incontestable knowledge of Swedenborg, were given to me by Monsieur Seraphitus, his cousin and the father of Seraphita.

“ In 1740,” continued Monsieur Becker, after a slight pause, “ Swedenborg fell into a state of absolute silence, from which he emerged to bid farewell to all his earthly occupations ; after which his thoughts turned exclusively to the Spiritual Life. He received the first commands of heaven in 1745, and he thus relates the nature of the vocation to which he was called : One evening, in London, after dining with a great appetite, a thick white mist seemed to fill his room. When the vapor dispersed a creature in human form rose from one corner of the apartment, and said in a stern tone, ‘ Do not eat so much.’ He refrained. The next night the same man returned, radiant in light, and said to him, ‘ I am sent of God, who has chosen you to explain to men the meaning of his Word and his Creation. I will tell you what to write.’ The vision lasted but a few moments. The ANGEL was clothed in purple. During that night the eyes of his *inner man* were opened, and he was forced to look into the heavens, into the world of spirits, and into hell, — three separate spheres ; where he encountered persons of his acquaintance who had

departed from their human form, some long since, others lately. Thenceforth Swedenborg lived wholly in the spiritual life, remaining in this world only as the messenger of God. His mission was ridiculed by the incredulous, but his conduct was plainly that of a being superior to humanity. In the first place, though limited in means to the bare necessities of life, he gave away enormous sums, and publicly, in several cities, restored the fortunes of great commercial houses when they were on the brink of failure. No one ever appealed to his generosity who was not immediately satisfied. A sceptical Englishman, determined to know the truth, followed him to Paris, and relates that there his doors stood always open. One day a servant complained of this apparent negligence, which laid him open to suspicion of thefts that might be committed by others. 'He need feel no anxiety,' said Swedenborg, smiling. 'But I do not wonder at his fear; he cannot see the guardian who protects my door.' In fact, no matter in what country he made his abode he never closed his doors, and nothing was ever stolen from him. At Gottenburg — a town situated some sixty miles from Stockholm — he announced, eight days before the news arrived by courier, the conflagration which ravaged Stockholm, and the exact time at which it took place. The Queen of Sweden wrote to her brother, the King, at Berlin, that one of her ladies-in-waiting, who was ordered by the courts to pay a sum of money which she was certain her husband had paid before his death, went to Swedenborg and begged him to ask her hus-

band where she could find proof of the payment. The following day Swedenborg, having done as the lady requested, pointed out the place where the receipt would be found. He also begged the deceased to appear to his wife, and the latter saw her husband in a dream, wrapped in a dressing-gown which he wore just before his death; and he showed her the paper in the place indicated by Swedenborg, where it had been securely put away. At another time, embarking from London in a vessel commanded by Captain Dixon, he overheard a lady asking if there were plenty of provisions on board. 'We do not want a great quantity,' he said; 'in eight days and two hours we shall reach Stockholm,' — which actually happened. This peculiar state of vision as to the things of earth — into which Swedenborg could put himself at will, and which astonished those about him — was, nevertheless, but a feeble representative of his faculty of looking into heaven.

“Not the least remarkable of his published visions is that in which he relates his journeys through the Astral Regions; his descriptions cannot fail to astonish the reader, partly through the crudity of their details. A man whose scientific eminence is incontestable, and who united in his own person powers of conception, will, and imagination, would surely have invented better if he had invented at all. The fantastic literature of the East offers nothing that can give an idea of this astounding work, full of the essence of poetry, if it is permissible to compare a work of faith with one of oriental fancy. The transportation of Swedenborg by

the Angel who served as guide to his first journey is told with a sublimity which exceeds, by the distance which God has placed betwixt the earth and sun, the great epics of Klopstock, Milton, Tasso, and Dante. This description, which serves in fact as an introduction to his work on the Astral Regions, has never been published; it is among the oral traditions left by Swedenborg to the three disciples who were nearest to his heart. Monsieur Silverichm has written them down. Monsieur Seraphitus endeavored more than once to talk to me about them; but the recollection of his cousin's words was so burning a memory that he always stopped short at the first sentence and became lost in a reverie from which I could not rouse him."

The old pastor sighed as he continued: "The baron told me that the argument by which the Angel proved to Swedenborg that these bodies are not made to wander through space puts all human science out of sight beneath the grandeur of a divine logic. According to the Seer, the inhabitants of Jupiter will not cultivate the sciences, which they call darkness; those of Mercury abhor the expression of ideas by speech, which seems to them too material, — their language is ocular; those of Saturn are continually tempted by evil spirits; those of the Moon are as small as six-year-old children, their voices issue from the abdomen, on which they crawl; those of Venus are gigantic in height, but stupid, and live by robbery, — although a part of this latter planet is inhabited by beings of great sweetness, who live in the love of God.

In short, he describes the customs and morals of all the peoples attached to the different globes, and explains the general meaning of their existence as related to the universe in terms so precise, giving explanations which agree so well with their visible evolutions in the system of the world, that some day, perhaps, scientific men will come to drink of these living waters.

“Here,” said Monsieur Becker, taking down a book and opening it at a mark, “here are the words with which he ended this work:—

“‘If any man doubts that I was transported through a vast number of Astral Regions, let him recall my observation of the distances in that other life, namely, that they exist only in relation to the external state of man; now, being transformed within like unto the Angelic Spirits of those Astral Spheres, I was able to understand them.’

“The circumstances to which we of this canton owe the presence among us of Baron Seraphitus, the beloved cousin of Swedenborg, enabled me to know all the events of the extraordinary life of that prophet. He has lately been accused of imposture in certain quarters of Europe, and the public prints reported the following fact based on a letter written by the Chevalier Baylon. Swedenborg, they said, informed by certain senators of a secret correspondence of the late Queen of Sweden with her brother, the Prince of Prussia, revealed his knowledge of the secrets contained in that correspondence to the Queen, making her believe he had obtained this knowledge by super-

natural means. A man worthy of all confidence, Monsieur Charles-Léonhard de Stahlhammer, captain in the Royal guard and knight of the Sword, answered the calumny with a convincing letter."

The pastor opened a drawer of his table and looked through a number of papers until he found a gazette which he held out to Wilfrid, asking him to read aloud the following letter : —

STOCKHOLM, May 18, 1788.

I HAVE read with amazement a letter which purports to relate the interview of the famous Swedenborg with Queen Louisa-Ulrika. The circumstances therein stated are wholly false; and I hope the writer will excuse me for showing him by the following faithful narration, which can be proved by the testimony of many distinguished persons then present and still living, how completely he has been deceived.

In 1758, shortly after the death of the Prince of Prussia Swedenborg came to court, where he was in the habit of attending regularly. He had scarcely entered the queen's presence before she said to him : " Well, Mr. Assessor, have you seen my brother ? " Swedenborg answered no, and the queen rejoined : " If you do see him, greet him for me." In saying this she meant no more than a pleasant jest, and had no thought whatever of asking him for information about her brother. Eight days later (not twenty-four as stated, nor was the audience a private one), Swedenborg again came to court, but so early that the queen had not left her apartment called the White Room, where she was conversing with her maids-of-honor and other ladies attached to the court. Swedenborg did not wait until she came forth, but entered the said room and whispered something in her ear. The queen, overcome with amazement, was taken ill,

and it was some time before she recovered herself. When she did so she said to those about her : " Only God and my brother knew the thing that he has just spoken of." She admitted that it related to her last correspondence with the prince on a subject which was known to them alone. I cannot explain how Swedenborg came to know the contents of that letter, but I can affirm on my honor, that neither Count H—— (as the writer of the article states) nor any other person intercepted, or read, the queen's letters. The senate allowed her to write to her brother in perfect security, considering the correspondence as of no interest to the State. It is evident that the author of the said article is ignorant of the character of Count H——. This honored gentleman, who has done many important services to his country, unites the qualities of a noble heart to gifts of mind, and his great age has not yet weakened these precious possessions. During his whole administration he added the weight of scrupulous integrity to his enlightened policy and openly declared himself the enemy of all secret intrigues and underhand dealings, which he regarded as unworthy means to attain an end. Neither did the writer of that article understand the Assessor Swedenborg. The only weakness of that essentially honest man was a belief in the apparition of spirits; but I knew him for many years, and I can affirm that he was as fully convinced that he met and talked with spirits as I am that I am writing at this moment. As a citizen and as a friend his integrity was absolute; he abhorred deception and led the most exemplary of lives. The version which the Chevalier Baylon gave of these facts is, therefore, entirely without justification; the visit stated to have been made to Swedenborg in the night-time by Count H—— and Count T—— is hereby contradicted. In conclusion, the writer of the letter may rest assured that I am not a fol-

lower of Swedenborg. The love of truth alone impels me to give this faithful account of a fact which has been so often stated with details that are entirely false. I certify to the truth of what I have written by adding my signature.

CHARLES-LÉONHARD DE STAHLHAMMER.

“The proofs which Swedenborg gave of his mission to the royal families of Sweden and Prussia were no doubt the foundation of the belief in his doctrines which is prevalent at the two courts,” said Monsieur Becker, putting the gazette into the drawer. “However,” he continued, “I shall not tell you all the facts of his visible and material life; indeed his habits prevented them from being fully known. He lived a hidden life; not seeking either riches or fame. He was even noted for a sort of repugnance to making proselytes; he opened his mind to few persons, and never showed his external powers of second-sight to any who were not eminent in faith, wisdom, and love. He could recognize at a glance the state of the soul of every person who approached him, and those whom he desired to reach with his inward language he converted into Seers. After the year 1745, his disciples never saw him do a single thing from any human motive. One man alone, a Swedish priest, named Mathesius, set afloat a story that he went mad in London in 1744. But a eulogium on Swedenborg prepared with minute care as to all the known events of his life, was pronounced after his death in 1772 on behalf of the Royal Academy of Sciences in the Hall of the Nobles at Stockholm, by Monsieur Sandels, counsellor of the Board of Mines. A declara-

tion made before the Lord Mayor of London gives the details of his last illness and death, in which he received the ministrations of Monsieur Ferelius a Swedish priest of the highest standing, and pastor of the Swedish Church in London, Mathesius being his assistant. All persons present attested that so far from denying the value of his writings Swedenborg firmly asserted their truth. 'In one hundred years,' Monsieur Ferelius quotes him as saying, 'my doctrine will guide the *Church.*' He predicted the day and hour of his death. On that day, Sunday, March 29, 1772, hearing the clock strike, he asked what time it was. 'Five o'clock' was the answer. 'It is well,' he answered; 'thank you, God bless you.' Ten minutes later he tranquilly departed, breathing a gentle sigh. Simplicity, moderation, and solitude were the features of his life. When he had finished writing any of his books he sailed either for London or for Holland, where he published them, and never spoke of them again. He published in this way twenty-seven different treatises, all written, he said, from the dictation of Angels. Be it true or false, few men have been strong enough to endure the flames of oral illumination.

"There they all are," said Monsieur Becker, pointing to a second shelf on which were some sixty volumes. "The treatises on which the Divine Spirit casts its most vivid gleams are seven in number, namely: 'Heaven and Hell;' 'Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom;' 'Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Providence;' 'The Apocalypse Revealed;' 'Con-

jugial Love and its Chaste Delights ; ' The True Christian Religion ; ' and ' An Exposition of the Internal Sense.' Swedenborg's explanation of the Apocalypse begins with these words," said Monsieur Becker, taking down and opening the volume nearest to him : " ' Herein I have written nothing of mine own ; I speak as I am bidden by the Lord, who said, through the same angel, to John : ' Thou shalt not seal the sayings of this Prophecy.' " (Revelation xxii. 10.)

" My dear Monsieur Wilfrid," said the old man, looking at his guest, " I often tremble in every limb as I read, during the long winter evenings the awe-inspiring works in which this man declares with perfect artlessness the wonders that are revealed to him. ' I have seen,' he says, ' Heaven and the Angels. The spiritual man sees his spiritual fellows far better than the terrestrial man sees the men of earth. In describing the wonders of heaven and beneath the heavens I obey the Lord's command. Others have the right to believe me or not as they choose. I cannot put them into the state in which God has put me ; it is not in my power to enable them to converse with Angels, nor to work miracles within their understanding ; they alone can be the instrument of their rise to angelic intercourse. It is now twenty-eight years since I have lived in the Spiritual world with angels, and on earth with men ; for it pleased God to open the eyes of my Spirit as he did that of Paul, and of Daniel and Elisha.'

" And yet," continued the pastor, thoughtfully, " certain persons have had visions of the spiritual world

through the complete detachment which somnambulism produces between their external form and their inner being. 'In this state,' says Swedenborg in his treatise on *Angelic Wisdom* (No. 257) 'Man may rise into the region of celestial light because, his corporeal senses being abolished, the influence of heaven acts without hindrance on his inner man.' Many persons who do not doubt that Swedenborg received celestial revelations think that his writings are not all the result of divine inspiration. Others insist on absolute adherence to him; while admitting his many obscurities, they believe that the imperfection of earthly language prevented the prophet from clearly revealing those spiritual visions whose clouds disperse to the eyes of those whom faith regenerates; for, to use the words of his greatest disciple, 'Flesh is but an external propagation.' To poets and to writers his presentation of the marvellous is amazing; to Seers it is simply reality. To some Christians his descriptions have seemed scandalous. Certain critics have ridiculed the celestial substance of his temples, his golden palaces, his splendid cities where angels disport themselves; they laugh at his groves of miraculous trees, his gardens where the flowers speak and the air is white, and the mystical stones, the sard, carbuncle, chrysolite, chrysopraxe, jacinth, chalcedony, beryl, the Urim and Thummim, are endowed with motion, express celestial truths, and reply by variations of light to questions put to them ('True Christian Religion,' 219). Many noble souls will not admit his spiritual worlds where colors are heard in delightful concert,

where language flames and flashes, where the Word is writ in pointed spiral letters ('True Christian Religion,' 278). Even in the North some writers have laughed at the gates of pearl, and the diamonds which stud the floors and walls of his New Jerusalem, where the most ordinary utensils are made of the rarest substances of the globe. 'But,' say his disciples, 'because such things are sparsely scattered on this earth does it follow that they are not abundant in other worlds? On earth they are terrestrial substances, whereas in heaven they assume celestial forms and are in keeping with angels.' In this connection Swedenborg has used the very words of Jesus Christ, who said, 'If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?'

"Monsieur," continued the pastor, with an emphatic gesture, "I have read the whole of Swedenborg's works; and I say it with pride, because I have done it and yet have retained my reason. In reading him men either miss his meaning or become Seers like him. Though I have evaded both extremes, I have often experienced unheard-of delights, deep emotions, inward joys, which alone can reveal to us the plenitude of truth,—the evidence of celestial Light. All things here below seem small indeed when the soul is lost in the perusal of these Treatises. It is impossible not to be amazed when we think that in the short space of thirty years this man wrote and published, on the truths of the Spiritual World, twenty-five quarto volumes, composed in Latin, of which the shortest has

five hundred pages, all of them printed in small type. He left, they say, twenty others in London, bequeathed to his nephew, Monsieur Silverichm, formerly almoner to the King of Sweden. Certainly a man who, between the ages of twenty and sixty, had already exhausted himself in publishing a series of encyclopædical works, must have received supernatural assistance in composing these later stupendous treatises, at an age, too, when human vigor is on the wane. You will find in these writings thousands of propositions, all numbered, none of which have been refuted. Throughout we see method and precision; the presence of the Spirit issuing and flowing down from a single fact, — the existence of angels. His ‘True Christian Religion,’ which sums up his whole doctrine and is vigorous with light, was conceived and written at the age of eighty-three. In fact, his amazing vigor and omniscience are not denied by any of his critics, not even by his enemies.

“Nevertheless,” said Monsieur Becker, slowly, “though I have drunk deep in this torrent of divine light, God has not opened the eyes of my inner being, and I judge these writings by the reason of an unregenerated man. I have often felt that the *inspired* Swedenborg must have misunderstood the Angels. I have laughed over certain visions which, according to his disciples, I ought to have believed with veneration. I have failed to imagine the spiral writing of the Angels or their golden belts, on which the gold is of great or lesser thickness. If, for example, this statement, ‘Some angels are solitary,’ affected me power

fully for a time, I was, on reflection, unable to reconcile this solitude with their marriages. I have not understood why the Virgin Mary should continue to wear blue satin garments in heaven. I have even dared to ask myself why those gigantic demons, Enakim and Hephilim, came so frequently to fight the cherubim on the apocalyptic plains of Armageddon; and I cannot explain to my own mind how Satans can argue with Angels. Monsieur le Baron Seraphitus assured me that these details concerned only the angels who live on earth in human form. The visions of the prophet are often blurred with grotesque figures. One of his spiritual tales, or 'Memorable relations,' as he called them, begins thus: 'I see the spirits assembling, they have hats upon their heads.' In another of these Memorabilia he receives from heaven a bit of paper, on which he saw, he says, the hieroglyphics of the primitive peoples, which were composed of curved lines traced from the finger-rings that are worn in heaven. However, perhaps I am wrong; possibly the material absurdities with which his works are strewn have spiritual significations. Otherwise, how shall we account for the growing influence of his religion? His church numbers to-day more than seven hundred thousand believers,—as many in the United States of America as in England, where there are seven thousand Swedenborgians in the city of Manchester alone. Many men of high rank in knowledge and in social position in Germany, in Prussia, and in the Northern kingdoms have publicly adopted the beliefs of Sweden-

borg ; which, I may remark, are more comforting than those of all other Christian communions. I wish I had the power to explain to you clearly in succinct language the leading points of the doctrine on which Swedenborg founded his church ; but I fear such a summary, made from recollection, would be necessarily defective. I shall, therefore, allow myself to speak only of those ‘Arcana’ which concern the birth of Seraphita.”

Here Monsieur Becker paused, as though composing his mind to gather up his ideas. Presently he continued, as follows :—

“After establishing mathematically that man lives eternally in spheres of either a lower or a higher grade, Swedenborg applies the term ‘Spiritual Angels’ to beings who in this world are prepared for heaven, where they become angels. According to him, God has not created angels ; none exist who have not been men upon the earth. The earth is the nursery-ground of heaven. The Angels are therefore not Angels as such (‘Angelic Wisdom,’ 57), they are transformed through their close conjunction with God ; which conjunction God never refuses, because the essence of God is not negative, but incessantly active. The spiritual angels pass through three natures of love, because man is only regenerated through successive stages (‘True Religion’). First, the LOVE OF SELF: the supreme expression of this love is human genius, whose works are worshipped. Next, LOVE OF LIFE: this love produces prophets,—great men whom the world accepts as guides and proclaims to be divine. Lastly, LOVE

OF HEAVEN, and this creates the Spiritual Angel. These angels are, so to speak, the flowers of humanity, which culminates in them and works for that culmination. They must possess either the love of heaven or the wisdom of heaven, but always Love before Wisdom.

“Thus the first transformation of the natural man is into Love. To reach this first degree, his previous existences must have passed through Hope and Charity, which prepare him for Faith and Prayer. The ideas acquired by the exercise of these virtues are transmitted to each of the human envelopes within which are hidden the metamorphoses of the INNER BEING; for nothing is separate, each existence is necessary to the other existences. Hope cannot advance without Charity, nor Faith without Prayer; they are the four fronts of a solid square. ‘One virtue missing,’ he said, ‘and the Spiritual Angel is like a broken pearl.’ Each of these existences is therefore a circle in which revolves the celestial riches of the inner being. The perfection of the Spiritual Angels comes from this mysterious progression in which nothing is lost of the high qualities that are successively acquired to attain each glorious incarnation; for at each transformation they cast away unconsciously the flesh and its errors. When the man lives in Love he has shed all evil passions: Hope, Charity, Faith, and Prayer have, in the words of Isaiah, purged the dross of his inner being, which can never more be polluted by earthly affections. Hence the grand saying of Christ quoted

by Saint Matthew, 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,' and those still grander words: 'If ye were of this world the world would love you, but I have chosen you out of the world; be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.'"

"The second transformation of man is to Wisdom. Wisdom is the understanding of celestial things to which the spirit is brought by Love. The Spirit of Love has acquired strength, the result of all vanquished terrestrial passions; it loves God blindly. But the Spirit of Wisdom has risen to understanding and knows why it loves. The wings of the one are spread and bear the spirit to God; the wings of the other are held down by the awe that comes of understanding: the spirit knows God. The one longs incessantly to see God and to fly to Him; the other attains to Him and trembles. The union effected between the Spirit of Love and the Spirit of Wisdom carries the human being into a Divine state during which time his soul is WOMAN and his body MAN, the last human manifestation in which the Spirit conquers Form, or Form still struggles against the Spirit,—for Form, that is, the flesh, is ignorant, rebels, and desires to continue gross. This supreme trial creates untold sufferings seen by Heaven alone,—the agony of Christ in the Garden of Olives.

"After death the first heaven opens to this dual and purified human nature. Therefore it is that man dies in despair while the Spirit dies in ecstasy. Thus, the

NATURAL, the state of beings not yet regenerated; the SPIRITUAL, the state of those who have become Angelic Spirits; and the DIVINE, the state in which the Angel exists before he breaks from his covering of flesh, are the three degrees of existence through which man enters heaven. One of Swedenborg's thoughts expressed in his own words will explain to you with wonderful clearness the difference between the NATURAL and the SPIRITUAL. 'To the minds of men,' he says, 'the Natural passes into the Spiritual; they regard the world under its visible aspects, they perceive it only as it can be realized by their senses. But to the apprehension of Angelic Spirits, the Spiritual passes into the Natural; they regard the world in its inward essence, and not in its form.' Thus human sciences are but analyses of form. The man of science as the world goes is purely external like his knowledge; his inner being is only used to preserve his aptitude for the perception of external truths. The Angelic Spirit goes far beyond that; his knowledge is the thought of which human science is but the utterance; he derives that knowledge from the Logos, and learns the law of CORRESPONDENCES by which the world is placed in unison with heaven. The WORD OF GOD was wholly written by pure Correspondences, and covers an esoteric or spiritual meaning, which according to the science of Correspondences, cannot be understood. 'There exist,' says Swedenborg ('Celestial Doctrine' 26), 'innumerable Arcana within the hidden meaning of the Correspondences. Thus the men who scoff at the books of the Prophets

where the Word is enshrined are as densely ignorant as those other men who know nothing of a science and yet ridicule its truths. To know the Correspondences of the Word with Heaven; to know the Correspondences which exist between the things visible and ponderable in the terrestrial world and the things invisible and imponderable in the spiritual world, is to hold heaven within our comprehension. All the objects of the manifold creations having emanated from God necessarily enfold a hidden meaning; according, indeed, to the grand thought of Isaiah, 'The earth is a garment.'

"This mysterious link between Heaven and the smallest atoms of created matter constitutes what Swedenborg calls a Celestial Arcanum, and his treatise on the 'Celestial Arcana' in which he explains the correspondences or significances of the Natural with, and to, the Spiritual, giving, to use the words of Jacob Boehm, the sign and seal of all things, occupies not less than sixteen volumes containing thirty thousand propositions. 'This marvellous knowledge of Correspondences which the goodness of God granted to Swedenborg,' says one of his disciples, 'is the secret of the interest which draws men to his works. According to him, all things are derived from heaven, all things lead back to heaven. His writings are sublime and clear; he speaks in heaven, and earth hears him. Take one of his sentences by itself and a volume could be made of it;' and the disciple quotes the following passages taken from a thousand others that would answer the same purpose.

“ ‘The kingdom of heaven,’ says Swedenborg (‘*Celestial Arcana*’), ‘is the kingdom of motives. ACTION is born in heaven, thence into the world, and, by degrees, to the infinitely remote parts of earth. Terrestrial effects being thus linked to celestial causes, all things are CORRESPONDENT and SIGNIFICANT. Man is the means of union between the Natural and the Spiritual.’

“ The Angelic Spirits therefore know the very nature of the Correspondences which link to heaven all earthly things; they know, too, the inner meaning of the prophetic words which foretell their evolutions. Thus to these Spirits everything here below has its significance; the tiniest flower is a thought, — a life which corresponds to certain lineaments of the Great Whole, of which they have a constant intuition. To them Adultery and the excesses spoken of in Scripture and by the Prophets, often garbled by self-styled scholars, mean the state of those souls which in this world persist in tainting themselves with earthly affections, thus compelling their divorce from Heaven. Clouds signify the veil of the Most High. Torches, shew-bread, horses and horsemen, harlots, precious stones, in short, everything named in Scripture, has to them a clear-cut meaning, and reveals the future of terrestrial facts in their relation to Heaven. They penetrate the truths contained in the Revelation of Saint John the divine, which human science has subsequently demonstrated and proved materially; such, for instance, as the following. (‘big,’ said Swedenborg, ‘with many human sciences’): ‘I saw a new heaven and a new

earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away' (Revelation *xxi.* 1). These Spirits know the supper at which the flesh of kings and the flesh of all men, free and bond, is eaten, to which an Angel standing in the sun has bidden them. They see the wingèd woman, clothed with the sun, and the mailed man. 'The horse of the Apocalypse,' says Swedenborg 'is the visible image of human intellect ridden by Death, for it bears within itself the elements of its own destruction.' Moreover, they can distinguish beings concealed under forms which to ignorant eyes would seem fantastic. When a man is disposed to receive the prophetic afflation of Correspondences, it rouses within him a perception of the Word; he comprehends that the creations are transformations only; his intellect is sharpened, a burning thirst takes possession of him which only Heaven can quench. He conceives, according to the greater or lesser perfection of his inner being, the power of the Angelic Spirits; and he advances, led by Desire (the least imperfect state of unregenerated man) towards Hope, the gateway to the world of Spirits, whence he reaches Prayer, which gives him the Key of Heaven.

“What being here below would not desire to render himself worthy of entrance into the sphere of those who live in secret by Love and Wisdom? Here on earth, during their lifetime, such spirits remain pure; they neither see, nor think, nor speak like other men. There are two ways by which perception comes, — one internal, the other external. Man is wholly external, the

Angelic Spirit wholly internal. The Spirit goes to the depth of Numbers, possesses a full sense of them, knows their significances. It controls Motion, and by reason of its ubiquity it shares in all things. 'An Angel,' says Swedenborg, 'is ever present to a man when desired' ('Angelic Wisdom'); for the Angel has the gift of detaching himself from his body, and he sees into heaven as the prophets and as Swedenborg himself saw into it. 'In this state,' writes Swedenborg ('True Religion,' 136), 'the spirit of a man may move from one place to another, his body remaining where it is, — a condition in which I lived for over twenty-six years.' It is thus that we should interpret all Biblical statements which begin, 'The Spirit led me.' Angelic Wisdom is to human wisdom what the innumerable forces of nature are to its action, which is one. All things live again, and move and have their being in the Spirit, which is in God. Saint Paul expresses this truth when he says, *In Deo sumus, movemur, et vivimus*, — we live, we act, we are in God.

"Earth offers no hindrance to the Angelic Spirit, just as the Word offers him no obscurity. His approaching divinity enables him to see the thought of God veiled in the Logos, just as, living by his inner being, the Spirit is in communication with the hidden meaning of all things on this earth. Science is the language of the Temporal world, Love is that of the Spiritual world. Thus man takes note of more than he is able to explain, while the Angelic Spirit sees and comprehends. Science depresses man; Love exalts the

Angel. Science is still seeking, Love has found. Man judges Nature according to his own relations to her; the Angelic Spirit judges it in its relation to Heaven. In short, all things have a voice for the Spirit. Spirits are in the secret of the harmony of all creations with each other; they comprehend the spirit of sound, the spirit of color, the spirit of vegetable life; they can question the mineral, and the mineral makes answer to their thoughts. What to them are sciences and the treasures of the earth when they grasp all things by the eye at all moments, when the worlds which absorb the minds of so many men are to them but the last step from which they spring to God? Love of heaven, or the Wisdom of heaven, is made manifest in them by a circle of light which surrounds them, and is visible to the Elect. Their innocence, of which that of children is a symbol, possesses, nevertheless, a knowledge which children have not; they are both innocent and learned. 'And,' says Swedenborg, 'the innocence of Heaven makes such an impression upon the soul that those whom it affects keep a rapturous memory of it which lasts them all their lives, as I myself have experienced. It is perhaps sufficient,' he goes on, 'to have only a minimum perception of it to be forever changed, to long to enter Heaven and the sphere of Hope.'

“ His doctrine of Marriage can be reduced to the following words: ‘The Lord has taken the beauty and the grace of the life of man and bestowed them upon woman. When man is not reunited to this beauty and

this grace of his life, he is harsh, sad, and sullen ; when he is reunited to them he is joyful and complete.' The Angels are ever at the perfect point of beauty. Marriages are celebrated by wondrous ceremonies. In these unions, which produce no children, man contributes the *Understanding*, woman the *Will*; they become one being, one Flesh here below, and pass to heaven clothed in the celestial form. On this earth, the natural attraction of the sexes towards enjoyment is an Effect which allures, fatigues and disgusts ; but in the form celestial the pair, now *one* in Spirit find within themselves a ceaseless source of joy. Swedenborg was led to see these nuptials of the Spirits, which in the words of Saint Luke (xx. 35) are neither marrying nor giving in marriage, and which inspire none but spiritual pleasures. An Angel offered to make him witness of such a marriage and bore him thither on his wings (the wings are a symbol and not a reality). The Angel clothed him in a wedding garment and when Swedenborg, finding himself thus robed in light, asked why, the answer was : ' For these events, our garments are illuminated ; they shine ; they are made nuptial.' ('Conjugal Love,' 19, 20, 21.) Then he saw two Angels, one coming from the South, the other from the East ; the Angel of the South was in a chariot drawn by two white horses, with reins of the color and brilliance of the dawn ; but lo, when they were near him in the sky, chariot and horses vanished. The Angel of the East, clothed in crimson, and the Angel of the South, in purple, drew together, like breaths, and mingled : one was the Angel of Love,

the other the Angel of Wisdom. Swedenborg's guide told him that the two Angels had been linked together on earth by an inward friendship and ever united though separated in life by great distances. Consent, the essence of all good marriage upon earth, is the habitual state of Angels in Heaven. Love is the light of their world. The eternal rapture of Angels comes from the faculty that God communicates to them to render back to Him the joy they feel through Him. This reciprocity of infinitude forms their life. They become infinite by participating of the essence of God, who generates Himself by Himself.

“The immensity of the Heavens where the Angels dwell is such that if man were endowed with sight as rapid as the darting of light from the sun to the earth, and if he gazed throughout eternity, his eyes could not reach the horizon, nor find an end. Light alone can give an idea of the joys of heaven. ‘It is,’ says Swedenborg (*‘Angelic Wisdom,’* 7, 25, 26, 27), ‘a vapor of the virtue of God, a pure emanation of His splendor, beside which our greatest brilliance is obscurity. It can compass all; it can renew all, and is never absorbed: it environs the Angel and unites him to God by infinite joys which multiply infinitely of themselves. This Light destroys whosoever is not prepared to receive it. No one here below, nor yet in Heaven can see God and live. This is the meaning of the saying (*Exodus xix. 12, 13, 21-23*) ‘Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the mount — lest ye break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many perish.’”

And again (Exodus xxxiv. 29-35), "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two Tables of testimony in his hand, his face shone, so that he put a veil upon it when he spake with the people, lest any of them die." The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ likewise revealed the light surrounding the Messengers from on high and the ineffable joys of the Angels who are forever imbued with it. "His face," says Saint Matthew (xvii. 1-5), "did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light — and a bright cloud overshadowed them."

"When a planet contains only those beings who reject the Lord, when his word is ignored, then the Angelic Spirits are gathered together by the four winds, and God sends forth an Exterminating Angel to change the face of the refractory earth, which in the immensity of this universe is to Him what an unfruitful seed is to Nature. Approaching the globe, this Exterminating Angel, borne by a comet, causes the planet to turn upon its axis, and the lands lately covered by the seas reappear, adorned in freshness and obedient to the laws proclaimed in Genesis; the Word of God is once more powerful on this new earth, which everywhere exhibits the effects of terrestrial waters and celestial flames. The light brought by the Angel from On High, causes the sun to pale. 'Then,' says Isaiah, (xix. 20) 'men will hide in the clefts of the rock and roll themselves in the dust of the earth.' 'They will cry to the mountains (Revelation), Fall on us! and to the seas, Swallow us up! Hide us from the face of Him

that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!’ The Lamb is the great figure and hope of the Angels misjudged and persecuted here below. Christ himself has said, ‘Blessed are those who mourn! Blessed are the simple-hearted! Blessed are they that love!’—All Swedenborg is there! Suffer, Believe, Love. To love truly must we not suffer? must we not believe? Love begets Strength, Strength bestows Wisdom, thence Intelligence; for Strength and Wisdom demand Will. To be intelligent, is not that to Know, to Wish, and to Will,—the three attributes of the Angelic Spirit? ‘If the universe has a meaning,’ Monsieur Saint-Martin said to me when I met him during a journey which he made in Sweden, ‘surely this is the one most worthy of God.’

“But, Monsieur,” continued the pastor after a thoughtful pause, “of what avail to you are these shreds of thoughts taken here and there from the vast extent of a work of which no true idea can be given except by comparing it to a river of light, to billows of flame? When a man plunges into it he is carried away as by an awful current. Dante’s poem seems but a speck to the reader submerged in the almost Biblical verses with which Swedenborg renders palpable the Celestial Worlds, as Beethoven built his palaces of harmony with thousands of notes, as architects have reared cathedrals with millions of stones. We roll in soundless depths, where our minds will not always sustain us. Ah, surely a great and powerful intellect is needed to bring us back, safe and sound, to our own social beliefs.

“Swedenborg,” resumed the pastor, “was particularly attached to the Baron de Seraphitz, whose name, according to an old Swedish custom, had taken from time immemorial the Latin termination of *us*. The baron was an ardent disciple of the Swedish prophet, who had opened the eyes of his Inner-Man and brought him to a life in conformity with the decrees from On-High. He sought for an Angelic Spirit among women; Swedenborg found her for him in a vision. His bride was the daughter of a London shoemaker, in whom, said Swedenborg, the life of Heaven shone, she having passed through all anterior trials. After the death, that is, the transformation of the prophet, the baron came to Jarvis to accomplish his celestial nuptials with the observances of Prayer. As for me, who am not a Seer, I have only known the terrestrial works of this couple. Their lives were those of saints whose virtues are the glory of the Roman Church. They ameliorated the condition of our people; they supplied them all with means in return for work, — little, perhaps, but enough for all their wants. Those who lived with them in constant intercourse never saw them show a sign of anger or impatience; they were constantly beneficent and gentle, full of courtesy and loving-kindness; their marriage was the harmony of two souls indissolubly united. Two eiders winging the same flight, the sound in the echo, the thought in the word, — these, perhaps, are true images of their union. Every one here in Jarvis loved them with an affection which I can compare only to the love of a plant for the

sun. The wife was simple in her manners, beautiful in form, lovely in face, with a dignity of bearing like that of august personages. In 1783, being then twenty-six years old, she conceived a child; her pregnancy was to the pair a solemn joy. They prepared to bid the earth farewell; for they told me they should be transformed when their child had passed the state of infancy which needed their fostering care until the strength to exist alone should be given to her.

“ Their child was born, — the Seraphita we are now concerned with. From the moment of her conception father and mother lived a still more solitary life than in the past, lifting themselves to heaven by Prayer. They hoped to see Swedenborg, and faith realized their hope. The day on which Seraphita came into the world Swedenborg appeared in Jarvis, and filled the room of the new-born child with light. I was told that he said, ‘ The work is accomplished; the Heavens rejoice!’ Sounds of unknown melodies were heard throughout the house, seeming to come from the four points of heaven on the wings of the wind. The spirit of Swedenborg led the father forth to the shores of the fiord and there quitted him. Certain inhabitants of Jarvis, having approached Monsieur Seraphitus as he stood on the shore, heard him repeat those blissful words of Scripture: ‘ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of Him who is sent of God!’

“ I had left the parsonage on my way to baptize the infant and name it, and perform the other duties required by law, when I met the baron returning to the

house. 'Your ministrations are superfluous,' he said; 'our child is to be without name on this earth. You must not baptize in the waters of an earthly Church one who has just been immersed in the fires of Heaven. This child will remain a blossom, it will not grow old; you will see it pass away. You exist, but our child has life; you have outward senses, the child has none, its being is all inward.' These words were uttered in so strange and supernatural a voice that I was more affected by them than by the shining of his face, from which light appeared to exude. His appearance realized the phantasmal ideas which we form of inspired beings as we read the prophecies of the Bible. But such effects are not rare among our mountains, where the nitre of perpetual snows produces extraordinary phenomena in the human organization.

"I asked him the cause of his emotion. 'Swedenborg came to us; he has just left me; I have breathed the air of heaven,' he replied. 'Under what form did he appear?' I said. 'Under his earthly form; dressed as he was the last time I saw him in London, at the house of Richard Shearsmith, Coldbath-fields, in July, 1771. He wore his brown frieze coat with steel buttons, his waistcoat buttoned to the throat, a white cravat, and the same magisterial wig rolled and powdered at the sides and raised high in front, showing his vast and luminous brow, in keeping with the noble square face, where all is power and tranquillity. I recognized the large nose with its fiery nostril, the mouth that ever smiled, — angelic mouth from which

these words, the pledge of my happiness, have just issued, "We shall meet soon."

"The conviction that shone on the baron's face forbade all discussion; I listened in silence. His voice had a contagious heat which made my bosom burn within me; his fanaticism stirred my heart as the anger of another makes our nerves vibrate. I followed him in silence to his house, where I saw the nameless child lying mysteriously folded to its mother's breast. The babe heard my step and turned its head toward me; its eyes were not those of an ordinary child. To give you an idea of the impression I received, I must say that already they saw and thought. The childhood of this predestined being was attended by circumstances quite extraordinary in our climate. For nine years our winters were milder and our summers longer than usual. This phenomenon gave rise to several discussions among scientific men; but none of their explanations seemed sufficient to academicians, and the baron smiled when I told him of them. The child was never seen in its nudity as other children are; it was never touched by man or woman, but lived a sacred thing upon the mother's breast, and it never cried. If you question old David he will confirm these facts about his mistress, for whom he feels an adoration like that of Louis IX. for the saint whose name he bore.

"At nine years of age the child began to pray; prayer is her life. You saw her in the church at Christmas, the only day on which she comes there; she is separated from the other worshippers by a visible space

If that space does not exist between herself and men she suffers. That is why she passes nearly all her time alone in the château. The events of her life are unknown; she is seldom seen; her days are spent in the state of mystical contemplation which was, so Catholic writers tell us, habitual with the early Christian solitaries, in whom the oral tradition of Christ's own words still remained. Her mind, her soul, her body, all within her is virgin as the snow on those mountains. At ten years of age she was just what you see her now. When she was nine her father and mother expired together, without pain or visible malady, after naming the day and hour at which they would cease to be. Standing at their feet she looked at them with a calm eye, not showing either sadness, or grief, or joy, or curiosity. When we approached to remove the two bodies she said, 'Carry them away!' 'Seraphita,' I said, for so we called her, 'are you not affected by the death of your father and your mother who loved you so much?' 'Dead?' she answered, 'no, they live in me forever — That is nothing,' she added, pointing without a trace of emotion to the bodies they were bearing away. I then saw her for the third time only since her birth. In church it is difficult to distinguish her; she stands near a column which, seen from the pulpit, is in shadow, so that I cannot observe her features.

“Of all the servants of the household there remained after the death of the master and mistress only old David, who, in spite of his eighty-two years, suffices to wait on his mistress. Some of our Jarvis people tell

wonderful tales about her. These have a certain weight in a land so essentially conducive to mystery as ours; and I am now studying the treatise on Incantations by Jean Wier and other works relating to demonology, where pretended supernatural events are recorded, hoping to find facts analogous to those which are attributed to her."

"Then you do not believe in her?" said Wilfred.

"Oh yes, I do," said the pastor, genially, "I think her a very capricious girl; a little spoilt by her parents, who turned her head with the religious ideas I have just revealed to you."

Minna shook her head in a way that gently expressed contradiction.

"Poor girl!" continued the old man, "her parents bequeathed to her that fatal exaltation of soul which misleads mystics and renders them all more or less mad. She subjects herself to fasts which horrify poor David. The good old man is like a sensitive plant which quivers at the slightest breeze, and glows under the first sun-ray. His mistress, whose incomprehensible language has become his, is the breeze and the sun-ray to him; in his eyes her feet are diamonds and her brow is strewn with stars; she walks environed with a white and luminous atmosphere; her voice is accompanied by music; she has the gift of rendering herself invisible. If you ask to see her, he will tell you she has gone to the *ASTRAL REGIONS*. It is difficult to believe such a story, is it not? You know all miracles bear more or less resemblance to the story of the

Golden Tooth. We have our golden tooth in Jarvis, that is all. Duncker the fisherman asserts that he has seen her plunge into the fiord and come up in the shape of an eider-duck, at other times walking on the billows in a storm. Fergus, who leads the flocks to the sæters, says that in rainy weather a circle of clear sky can be seen over the Swedish castle; and that the heavens are always blue above Seraphita's head when she is on the mountain. Many women hear the tones of a mighty organ when Seraphita enters the church, and ask their neighbors earnestly if they too do not hear them. But my daughter, for whom during the last two years Seraphita has shown much affection, has never heard this music, and has never perceived the heavenly perfumes which, they say, make the air fragrant about her when she moves. Minna, to be sure, has often on returning from their walks together expressed to me the delight of a young girl in the beauties of our spring-time, in the spicy odors of budding larches and pines and the earliest flowers; but after our long winters what can be more natural than such pleasure? The companionship of this so-called spirit has nothing so very extraordinary in it, has it, my child?"

"The secrets of that spirit are not mine," said Minna. "Near it I know all, away from it I know nothing; near that exquisite life I am no longer myself, far from it I forget all. The time we pass together is a dream which my memory scarcely retains. I may have heard yet not remember the music which the women tell of; in that presence, I may have breathed

celestial perfumes, seen the glory of the heavens, and yet be unable to recollect them here."

"What astonishes me most," resumed the pastor, addressing Wilfrid, "is to notice that you suffer from being near her."

"Near her!" exclaimed the stranger, "she has never so much as let me touch her hand. When she saw me for the first time her glance intimidated me; she said: 'You are welcome here, for you were to come.' I fancied that she knew me. I trembled. It is fear that forces me to believe in her."

"With me it is love," said Minna, without a blush.

"Are you making fun of me?" said Monsieur Becker, laughing good-humoredly; "you my daughter, in calling yourself a Spirit of Love, and you, Monsieur Wilfrid, in pretending to be a Spirit of Wisdom?"

He drank a glass of beer and so did not see the singular look which Wilfrid cast upon Minna.

"Jesting apart," resumed the old gentleman, "I have been much astonished to hear that these two mad-caps ascended to the summit of the Falberg; it must be a girlish exaggeration; they probably went to the crest of a ledge. It is impossible to reach the peaks of the Falberg."

"If so, father," said Minna, in an agitated voice, "I must have been under the power of a spirit; for indeed we reached the summit of the Ice-Cap."

"This is really serious," said Monsieur Becker. "Minna is always truthful."

"Monsieur Becker," said Wilfrid, "I swear to you

that Seraphita exercises such extraordinary power over me that I know no language in which I can give you the least idea of it. She has revealed to me things known to myself alone."

"Somnambulism!" said the old man. "A great many such effects are related by Jean Wier as phenomena easily explained and formerly observed in Egypt."

"Lend me Swedenborg's theosophical works," said Wilfrid, "and let me plunge into those gulfs of light,—you have given me a thirst for them."

Monsieur Becker took down a volume and gave it to his guest, who instantly began to read it. It was about nine o'clock in the evening. The serving-woman brought in the supper. Minna made tea. The repast over, each returned silently to his or her occupation; the pastor read the Incantations; Wilfrid pursued the spirit of Swedenborg; and the young girl continued to sew, her mind absorbed in recollections. It was a true Norwegian evening—peaceful, studious, and domestic; full of thoughts, flowers blooming beneath the snow. Wilfrid, as he devoured the pages of the prophet, lived by his inner senses only; the pastor, looking up at times from his book, called Minna's attention to the absorption of their guest with an air that was half-serious, half-jesting. To Minna's thoughts the face of Seraphitus smiled upon her as it hovered above the clouds of smoke which enveloped them. The clock struck twelve. Suddenly the outer door was opened violently. Heavy but hurried steps, the steps of a

terrified old man, were heard in the narrow vestibule between the two doors ; then David burst into the parlor.

“ Danger ! danger ! ” he cried. “ Come ! come, all ! The evil spirits are unchained ! Fiery mitres are on their heads ! Demons, Vertumni, Sirens ! they tempt her as Jesus was tempted on the mountain ! Come, come ! and drive them away. ”

“ Do you not recognize the language of Swedenborg ? ” said the pastor, laughing, to Wilfrid. “ Here it is ; pure from the source. ”

But Wilfrid and Minna were gazing in terror at old David, who, with hair erect, and eyes distraught, his legs trembling and covered with snow, for he had come without snow-shoes, stood swaying from side to side, as if some boisterous wind were shaking him.

“ Is he harmed ? ” cried Minna.

“ The devils hope and try to conquer her, ” replied the old man.

The words made Wilfrid’s pulses throb.

“ For the last five hours she has stood erect, her eyes raised to heaven and her arms extended ; she suffers, she cries to God. I cannot cross the barrier ; Hell has posted the Vertumni as sentinels. They have set up an iron wall between her and her old David. She wants me, but what can I do ? Oh, help me ! help me ! Come and pray ! ”

The old man’s despair was terrible to see.

“ The Light of God is defending her, ” he went on, with infectious faith, “ but oh ! she might yield to violence. ”

“ Silence, David ! you are raving. This is a matter

to be verified. We will go with you," said the pastor, "and you shall see that there are no Vertumni, nor Satans, nor Sirens, in that house."

"Your father is blind," whispered David to Minna.

Wilfrid, on whom the reading of Swedenborg's first treatise, which he had rapidly gone through, had produced a powerful effect, was already in the corridor putting on his skées; Minna was ready in a few moments, and both left the old men far behind as they darted forward to the Swedish castle.

"Do you hear that cracking sound?" said Wilfrid.

"The ice of the fiord stirs," answered Minna; "the spring is coming."

Wilfrid was silent. When the two reached the courtyard they were conscious that they had neither the faculty nor the strength to enter the house.

"What think you of her?" asked Wilfrid.

"See that radiance!" cried Minna, going towards the window of the salon. "He is there! How beautiful! O my Seraphitus, take me!"

The exclamation was uttered inwardly. She saw Seraphitus standing erect, lightly swathed in an opal-tinted mist that disappeared at a little distance from the body, which seemed almost phosphorescent.

"How beautiful she is!" cried Wilfrid, mentally.

Just then Monsieur Becker arrived, followed by David; he saw his daughter and guest standing before the window; going up to them, he looked into the salon and said quietly, "Well, my good David, she is only saying her prayers."

“ Ah, but try to enter, Monsieur.”

“ Why disturb those who pray ? ” answered the pastor.

At this instant the moon, rising above the Falberg, cast its rays upon the window. All three turned round, attracted by this natural effect which made them quiver ; when they turned back to again look at Seraphita she had disappeared.

“ How strange ! ” exclaimed Wilfrid.

“ I hear delightful sounds,” said Minna.

“ Well,” said the pastor, “ it is all plain enough ; she is going to bed.”

David had entered the house. The others took their way back in silence ; none of them interpreted the vision in the same manner, — Monsieur Becker doubted, Minna adored, Wilfrid longed.

Wilfrid was a man about thirty-six years of age. His figure, though broadly developed, was not wanting in symmetry. Like most men who distinguish themselves above their fellows, he was of medium height ; his chest and shoulders were broad, and his neck short, — a characteristic of those whose hearts are near their heads ; his hair was black, thick, and fine ; his eyes, of a yellow brown, had, as it were, a solar brilliancy, which proclaimed with what avidity his nature aspired to Light. Though these strong and virile features were defective through the absence of an inward peace, — granted only to a life without storms or conflicts, — they plainly showed the inexhaustible resources of impetuous senses and the appetites of instinct ; just as every motion revealed the perfection of the man’s physical apparatus, the

flexibility of his senses, and their fidelity when brought into play. This man might contend with savages, and hear, as they do, the tread of enemies in distant forests; he could follow a scent in the air, a trail on the ground, or see on the horizon the signal of a friend. His sleep was light, like that of all creatures who will not allow themselves to be surprised. His body came quickly into harmony with the climate of any country where his tempestuous life conducted him. Art and science would have admired his organization in the light of a human model. Everything about him was symmetrical and well-balanced, — action and heart, intelligence and will. At first sight he might be classed among purely instinctive beings, who give themselves blindly up to the material wants of life; but in the very morning of his days he had flung himself into a higher social world, with which his feelings harmonized; study had widened his mind, reflection had sharpened his power of thought, and the sciences had enlarged his understanding. He had studied human laws, — the working of self-interests brought into conflict by the passions, and he seemed to have early familiarized himself with the abstractions on which societies rest. He had pored over books, — those deeds of dead humanity; he had spent whole nights of pleasure in every European capital; he had slept on fields of battle the night before the combat and the night that followed victory. His stormy youth may have flung him on the deck of some corsair and sent him among the contrasting regions of the globe; thus it was that he knew the

actions of a living humanity. He knew the present and the past, — a double history ; that of to-day, that of other days. Many men have been, like Wilfrid, equally powerful by the Hand, by the Heart, by the Head ; like him, the majority have abused their triple power. But though this man still held by certain outward liens to the slimy side of humanity, he belonged also and positively to the sphere where force is intelligent. In spite of the many veils which enveloped his soul, there were certain ineffable symptoms of this fact which were visible to pure spirits, to the eyes of the child whose innocence has known no breath of evil passions, to the eyes of the old man who has lived to regain his purity.

These signs revealed a Cain for whom there was still hope, — one who seemed as though he were seeking absolution from the ends of the earth. Minna suspected the galley-slave of glory in the man ; Seraphita recognized him. Both admired and both pitied him. Whence came their prescience? Nothing could be more simple nor yet more extraordinary. As soon as we seek to penetrate the secrets of Nature, where nothing is secret, and where it is only necessary to have the eyes to see, we perceive that the simple produces the marvellous.

“Seraphitus,” said Minna one evening a few days after Wilfrid’s arrival in Jarvis, “you read the soul of this stranger while I have only vague impressions of it. He chills me or else he excites me ; but you seem to know the cause of this cold and of this heat ; tell me what it means, for you know all about him.”

“Yes, I have seen the causes,” said Seraphitus, lowering his large eyelids.

“By what power?” asked the curious Minna.

“I have the gift of Specialism,” he answered. “Specialism is an inward sight which can penetrate all things ; you will only understand its full meaning through a comparison. In the great cities of Europe where works are produced by which the human Hand seeks to represent the effects of the moral nature as well as those of the physical nature, there are glorious men who express ideas in marble. The sculptor acts on the stone ; he fashions it ; he puts a realm of ideas into it. There are statues which the hand of man has endowed with the faculty of representing the whole noble side of humanity, or the whole evil side ; most men see in such marbles a human figure and nothing more ; a few other men, a little higher in the scale of being, perceive a fraction of the thoughts expressed in the statue ; but the Initiates in the secrets of art are of the same intellect as the sculptor ; they see in his work the whole universe of his thought. Such persons are in themselves the principles of art ; they bear within them a mirror which reflects nature in her slightest manifestations. Well ! so it is with me ; I have within me a mirror before which the moral nature, with its causes and its effects, appears and is reflected. Entering thus into the consciousness of others I am able to divine both the future and the past. How ? do you still ask how ? Imagine that the marble statue is the body of a man, a piece of statuary in which we see the emotion, sentiment, passion, vice

or crime, virtue or repentance which the creating hand has put into it, and you will then comprehend how it is that I read the soul of this foreigner — though what I have said does not explain the gift of Specialism; for to conceive the nature of that gift we must possess it.”

Though Wilfrid belonged to the two first divisions of humanity, the men of force and the men of thought, yet his excesses, his tumultuous life, and his misdeeds had often turned him towards Faith; for doubt has two sides; a side to the light and a side to the darkness. Wilfrid had too closely clasped the world under its forms of Matter and of Mind not to have acquired that thirst for the unknown, that longing to *go beyond* which lay their grasp upon the men who know, and wish, and will. But neither his knowledge, nor his actions, nor his will, had found direction. He had fled from social life from necessity; as a great criminal seeks the cloister. Remorse, that virtue of weak beings, did not touch him. Remorse is impotence, impotence which sins again. Repentance alone is powerful; it ends all. But in traversing the world, which he made his cloister, Wilfrid had found no balm for his wounds; he saw nothing in nature to which he could attach himself. In him, despair had dried the sources of desire. He was one of those beings who, having gone through all passions and come out victorious, have nothing more to raise in their hot-beds, and who, lacking opportunity to put themselves at the head of their fellow-men to trample under iron heel entire populations, buy, at the price of

a horrible martyrdom, the faculty of ruining themselves in some belief, — rocks sublime, which await the touch of a wand that comes not to bring the waters gushing from their far-off springs.

Led by a scheme of his restless, inquiring life to the shores of Norway, the sudden arrival of winter had detained the wanderer at Jarvis. The day on which, for the first time, he saw Seraphita, the whole past of his life faded from his mind. The young girl excited emotions which he had thought could never be revived. The ashes gave forth a lingering flame at the first murmurings of that voice. Who has ever felt himself return to youth and purity after growing cold and numb with age and soiled with impurity? Suddenly, Wilfrid loved as he had never loved; he loved secretly, with faith, with fear, with inward madness. His life was stirred to the very source of being at the mere thought of seeing Seraphita. As he listened to her he was transported into unknown worlds; he was mute before her, she magnetized him. There, beneath the snows, among the glaciers, bloomed the celestial flower to which his hopes, so long betrayed, aspired; the sight of which awakened ideas of freshness, purity, and faith which grouped about his soul and lifted it to higher regions, — as Angels bear to heaven the Elect in those symbolic pictures inspired by the guardian spirit of a great master. Celestial perfumes softened the granite hardness of the rocky scene; light endowed with speech shed its divine melodies on the path of him who looked to heaven. After emptying the cup of terrestrial love which his

teeth had bitten as he drank it, he saw before him the chalice of salvation where the limpid waters sparkled, making thirsty for ineffable delights whoever dare apply his lips burning with a faith so strong that the crystal shall not be shattered.

But Wilfrid now encountered the wall of brass for which he had been seeking up and down the earth. He went impetuously to Seraphita, meaning to express the whole force and bearing of a passion under which he bounded like the fabled horse beneath the iron horseman, firm in his saddle, whom nothing moves while the efforts of the fiery animal only made the rider heavier and more solid. He sought her to relate his life, — to prove the grandeur of his soul by the grandeur of his faults, to show the ruins of his desert. But no sooner had he crossed her threshold, and found himself within the zone of those eyes of scintillating azure, that met no limits forward and left none behind, than he grew calm and submissive, as a lion, springing on his prey in the plains of Africa, receives from the wings of the wind a message of love, and stops his bound. A gulf opened before him, into which his frenzied words fell and disappeared, and from which arose a voice which changed his being; he became as a child, a child of sixteen, timid and frightened before this maiden with serene brow, this white figure whose inalterable calm was like the cruel impassibility of human justice. The combat between them had never ceased until this evening, when with a glance she brought him down, as a falcon making his dizzy

spirals in the air around his prey causes it to fall stupefied to earth, before carrying it to his eyrie.

We may note within ourselves many a long struggle the end of which is one of our own actions, — struggles which are, as it were, the reverse side of humanity. This reverse side belongs to God; the obverse side to men. More than once Seraphita had proved to Wilfrid that she knew this hidden and ever varied side, which is to the majority of men a second being. Often she said to him in her dove-like voice: “Why all this vehemence?” when on his way to her he had sworn she should be his. Wilfrid was, however, strong enough to raise the cry of revolt to which he had given utterance in Monsieur Becker’s study. The narrative of the old pastor had calmed him. Sceptical and derisive as he was, he saw belief like a sidereal brilliance dawning on his life. He asked himself if Seraphita were not an exile from the higher spheres seeking the homeward way. The fanciful deifications of all ordinary lovers he could not give to this lily of Norway in whose divinity he believed. Why lived she here beside this fiord? What did she? Questions that received no answer filled his mind. Above all, what was about to happen between them? What fate had brought him there? To him, Seraphita was the motionless marble, light nevertheless as a vapor, which Minna had seen that day poised above the precipices of the Falberg. Could she thus stand on the edge of all gulfs without danger, without a tremor of the arching eyebrows, or a quiver of the light of the eye? If

his love was to be without hope, it was not without curiosity.

From the moment when Wilfrid suspected the ethereal nature of the enchantress who had told him the secrets of his life in melodious utterance, he had longed to try to subject her, to keep her to himself, to tear her from the heaven where, perhaps, she was awaited. Earth and Humanity seized their prey; he would imitate them. His pride, the only sentiment through which man can long be exalted, would make him happy in this triumph for the rest of his life. The idea sent the blood boiling through his veins, and his heart swelled. If he did not succeed, he would destroy her, — it is so natural to destroy that which we cannot possess, to deny what we cannot comprehend, to insult that which we envy.

On the morrow, Wilfrid, filled with ideas which the extraordinary events of the previous night naturally awakened in his mind, resolved to question David, and went to find him on pretext of asking after Seraphita's health. Though Monsieur Becker spoke of the old servant as falling into dotage, Wilfrid relied on his own perspicacity to discover scraps of truth in the torrent of the old man's rambling talk.

David had the immovable, undecided, physiognomy of an octogenarian. Under his white hair lay a forehead lined with wrinkles like the stone courses of a ruined wall; and his face was furrowed like the bed of a dried-up torrent. His life seemed to have retreated wholly to the eyes, where light still shone,

though its gleams were obscured by a mistiness which seemed to indicate either an active mental alienation or the stupid stare of drunkenness. His slow and heavy movements betrayed the glacial weight of age, and communicated an icy influence to whoever allowed themselves to look long at him, — for he possessed the magnetic force of torpor. His limited intelligence was only roused by the sight, the hearing, or the recollection of his mistress. She was the soul of this wholly material fragment of an existence. Any one seeing David alone by himself would have thought him a corpse; let Seraphita enter, let her voice be heard, or a mention of her be made, and the dead came forth from his grave and recovered speech and motion. The dry bones were not more truly awakened by the divine breath in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and never was that apocalyptic vision better realized than in this Lazarus issuing from the sepulchre into life at the voice of a young girl. His language, which was always figurative and often incomprehensible, prevented the inhabitants of the village from talking with him; but they respected a mind that deviated so utterly from common ways, — a thing which the masses instinctively admire.

Wilfrid found him in the antechamber, apparently asleep beside the stove. Like a dog who recognizes a friend of the family, the old man raised his eyes, saw the foreigner, and did not stir.

“Where is she?” inquired Wilfrid, sitting down beside him.

David fluttered his fingers in the air as if to express the flight of a bird.

“Does she still suffer?” asked Wilfrid.

“Beings vowed to Heaven are able so to suffer that suffering does not lessen their love; this is the mark of the true faith,” answered the old man, solemnly, like an instrument which, on being touched, gives forth an accidental note.

“Who taught you those words?”

“The Spirit.”

“What happened to her last night? Did you force your way past the Vertumni standing sentinel? did you evade the Mammons?”

“Yes;” answered David, as though awaking from a dream.

The misty gleam of his eyes melted into a ray that came direct from the soul and made it by degrees brilliant as that of an eagle, as intelligent as that of a poet.

“What did you see?” asked Wilfrid, astonished at this sudden change.

“I saw Species and Shapes; I heard the Spirit of all things; I beheld the revolt of the Evil Ones; I listened to the words of the Good. Seven devils came, and seven archangels descended from on high. The archangels stood apart and looked on through veils. The devils were close by; they shone, they acted. Mammon came on his pearly shell in the shape of a beautiful naked woman; her snowy body dazzled the eye, no human form ever equalled it; and he said, ‘I am

Pleasure ; thou shalt possess me !' Lucifer, prince of serpents, was there in sovereign robes ; his Manhood was glorious as the beauty of an angel, and he said, ' Humanity shall be at thy feet !' The Queen of misers, — she who gives back naught that she has ever received, — the Sea, came wrapped in her virent mantle ; she opened her bosom, she showed her gems, she brought forth her treasures and offered them ; waves of sapphire and of emerald came at her bidding ; her hidden wonders stirred, they rose to the surface of her breast, they spoke ; the rarest pearl of Ocean spread its iridescent wings and gave voice to its marine melodies, saying, ' Twin daughter of suffering, we are sisters ! await me ; let us go together ; all I need is to become a Woman.' The Bird with the wings of an eagle and the paws of a lion, the head of a woman and the body of a horse, the Animal, fell down before her and licked her feet, and promised seven hundred years of plenty to her best-beloved daughter. Then came the most formidable of all, the Child, weeping at her knees, and saying, ' Wilt thou leave me, feeble and suffering as I am ? oh, my mother, stay !' and he played with her, and shed languor on the air, and the Heavens themselves had pity for his wail. The Virgin of pure song brought forth her choirs to relax the soul. The Kings of the East came with their slaves, their armies, and their women ; the Wounded asked her for succor, the Sorrowful stretched forth their hands : ' Do not leave us ! do not leave us !' they cried. I, too, I cried, ' Do not leave us ! we adore thee ! stay !'

Flowers, bursting from the seed, bathed her in their fragrance which uttered, 'Stay!' The giant Enakim came forth from Jupiter, leading Gold and its friends and all the Spirits of the Astral Regions which are joined with him, and they said, 'We are thine for seven hundred years.' At last came Death on his pale horse, crying, 'I will obey thee!' One and all fell prostrate before her. Could you but have seen them! They covered as it were a vast plain, and they cried aloud to her, 'We have nurtured thee, thou art our child; do not abandon us!' At length Life issued from her Ruby Waters, and said, 'I will not leave thee!' then, finding Seraphita silent, she flamed upon her as the sun, crying out, 'I am light!' 'THE LIGHT is there!' cried Seraphita, pointing to the clouds where stood the archangels; but she was wearied out; Desire had wrung her nerves, she could only cry, 'My God! my God!' Ah! many an Angelic Spirit, scaling the mountain and nigh to the summit, has set his foot upon a rolling stone which plunged him back into the abyss! All these lost Spirits adored her constancy; they stood around her, — a choir without a song, — weeping and whispering, 'Courage!' At last she conquered; Desire — let loose upon her in every Shape and every Species — was vanquished. She stood in prayer, and when at last her eyes were lifted she saw the feet of Angels circling in the Heavens."

"She saw the feet of Angels?" repeated Wilfrid.

"Yes," said the old man.

"Was it a dream that she told you?" asked Wilfrid.

“A dream as real as your life,” answered David; “I was there.”

The calm assurance of the old servaut affected Wilfrid powerfully. He went away asking himself whether these visions were any less extraordinary than those he had read of in Swedenborg the night before.

“If Spirits exist, they must act,” he was saying to himself as he entered the parsonage, where he found Monsieur Becker alone.

“Dear pastor,” he said, “Seraphita is connected with us in form only, and even that form is inexplicable. Do not think me a madman or a lover; a profound conviction cannot be argued with. Convert my belief into scientific theories, and let us try to enlighten each other. To-morrow evening we shall both be with her.”

“What then?” said Monsieur Becker.

“If her eye ignores space,” replied Wilfrid, “if her thought is an intelligent sight which enables her to perceive all things in their essence, and to connect them with the general evolution of the universe, if, in a word, she sees and knows all, let us seat the Pythoness on her tripod, let us force this pitiless eagle by threats to spread its wings! Help me! I breathe a fire which burns my vitals; I must quench it or it will consume me. I have found a prey at last, and it shall be mine!”

“The conquest will be difficult,” said the pastor, “because this girl is —”

“Is what?” cried Wilfrid.

“Mad,” said the old man.

“I will not dispute her madness, but neither must you dispute her wonderful powers. Dear Monsieur Becker, she has often confounded me with her learning. Has she travelled?”

“From her house to the fiord, no further.”

“Never left this place!” exclaimed Wilfrid. “Then she must have read immensely.”

“Not a page, not one iota! I am the only person who possesses any books in Jarvis. The works of Swedenborg — the only books that were in the château — you see before you. She has never looked into a single one of them.”

“Have you tried to talk with her?”

“What good would that do?”

“Does no one live with her in that house?”

“She has no friends but you and Minna, nor any servant except old David.”

“It cannot be that she knows nothing of science nor of art.”

“Who should teach her?” said the pastor.

“But if she can discuss such matters pertinently, as she has often done with me, what do you make of it?”

“The girl may have acquired through years of silence the faculties enjoyed by Apollonius of Tyana and other pretended sorcerers burned by the Inquisition, which did not choose to admit the fact of second-sight.

“If she can speak Arabic, what would you say to that?”

“The history of medical science gives many authentic instances of girls who have spoken languages entirely unknown to them.”

“What can I do?” exclaimed Wilfrid. “She knows of secrets in my past life known only to me.”

“I shall be curious to see if she can tell me thoughts that I have confided to no living person,” said Monsieur Becker.

Minna entered the room.

“Well, my daughter, and how is your familiar spirit?”

“He suffers, father,” she answered, bowing to Wilfrid. “Human passions, clothed in their false riches, surrounded him all night, and showed him all the glories of the world. But you think these things mere tales.”

“Tales as beautiful to those who read them in their brains as the ‘Arabian Nights’ to common minds,” said the pastor, smiling.

“Did not Satan carry our Saviour to the pinnacle of the Temple, and show him all the kingdoms of the world?” she said.

“The Evangelists,” replied her father, “did not correct their copies very carefully, and several versions are in existence.”

“You believe in the reality of these visions?” said Wilfrid to Minna.

“Who can doubt when he relates them.”

“He?” demanded Wilfrid. “Who?”

“He who is there,” replied Minna, motioning towards the château.

“ Are you speaking of Seraphita ? ” he said.

The young girl bent her head, and looked at him with an expression of gentle mischief.

“ You too ! ” exclaimed Wilfrid, “ you take pleasure in confounding me. Who and what is she ? What do you think of her ? ”

“ What I feel is inexplicable, ” said Minna, blushing.

“ You are all crazy ! ” cried the pastor.

“ Farewell, until to-morrow evening, ” said Wilfrid.

IV.

THE CLOUDS OF THE SANCTUARY.

THERE are pageants in which all the material splendors that man arrays co-operate. Nations of slaves and divers have searched the sands of ocean and the bowels of earth for the pearls and diamonds which adorn the spectators. Transmitted as heirlooms from generation to generation, these treasures have shone on consecrated brows and could be the most faithful of historians had they speech. They know the joys and sorrows of the great and those of the small. Everywhere do they go; they are worn with pride at festivals, carried in despair to usurers, borne off in triumph amid blood and pillage, enshrined in masterpieces conceived by art for their protection. None, except the pearl of Cleopatra, has been lost. The Great and the Fortunate assemble to witness the coronation of some king, whose trappings are the work of men's hands, but the purple of whose raiment is less glorious than that of the flowers of the field. These festivals, splendid in light, bathed in music which the hand of man creates, aye, all the triumphs of that hand are subdued by a thought, crushed by a sentiment. The Mind can illumine in a man and round a man a light more vivid, can open his ear to more melodious harmonies, can seat him on

clouds of shining constellations and teach him to question them. The Heart can do still greater things. Man may come into the presence of one sole being and find in a single word, a single look, an influence so weighty to bear, of so luminous a light, so penetrating a sound, that he succumbs and kneels before it. The most real of all splendors are not in outward things, they are within us. A single secret of science is a realm of wonders to the man of learning. Do the trumpets of Power, the jewels of Wealth, the music of Joy, or a vast concourse of people attend his mental festival? No, he finds his glory in some dim retreat where, perchance, a pallid suffering man whispers a single word into his ear; that word, like a torch lighted in a mine, reveals to him a Science. All human ideas, arrayed in every attractive form which Mystery can invent surrounded a blind man seated in a wayside ditch. Three worlds, the Natural, the Spiritual, the Divine, with all their spheres, opened their portals to a Florentine exile; he walked attended by the Happy and the Unhappy; by those who prayed and those who moaned; by angels and by souls in hell. When the Sent of God, who knew and could accomplish all things, appeared to three of his disciples it was at eventide, at the common table of the humblest of inns; and then and there the Light broke forth, shattering Material Forms, illuminating the Spiritual Faculties, so that they saw him in his glory, and the earth lay at their feet like a cast-off sandal.

Monsieur Becker, Wilfrid, and Minna were all under

the influence of fear as they took their way to meet the extraordinary being whom each desired to question. To them, in their several ways, the Swedish castle had grown to mean some gigantic representation, some spectacle like those whose colors and masses are skillfully and harmoniously marshalled by the poets, and whose personages, imaginary actors to men, are real to those who begin to penetrate the Spiritual World. On the tiers of this Coliseum Monsieur Becker seated the gray legions of Doubt, the stern ideas, the specious formulas of Dispute. He convoked the various antagonistic worlds of philosophy and religion, and they all appeared, in the guise of a fleshless shape, like that in which art embodies Time, — an old man bearing in one hand a scythe, in the other a broken globe, the human universe.

Wilfrid had bidden to the scene his earliest illusions and his latest hopes, human destiny and its conflicts, religion and its conquering powers.

Minna saw heaven confusedly by glimpses; love raised a curtain wrought with mysterious images, and the melodious sounds which met her ear redoubled her curiosity.

To all three, therefore, this evening was to be what that other evening had been for the pilgrims to Emmaüs, what a vision was to Dante, an inspiration to Homer, — to them, three aspects of the world revealed, veils rent away, doubts dissipated, darkness illumined. Humanity in all its moods expecting light could not be better represented than here by this young girl, this man in

the vigor of his age, and these old men, of whom one was learned enough to doubt, the other ignorant enough to believe. Never was any scene more simple in appearance, nor more portentous in reality.

When they entered the room, ushered in by old David, they found Seraphita standing by a table on which were served the various dishes which compose a "tea;" a form of collation which in the North takes the place of wine and its pleasures, — reserved more exclusively for Southern climes. Certainly nothing proclaimed in her, or in him, a being with the strange power of appearing under two distinct forms; nothing about her betrayed the manifold powers which she wielded. Like a careful housewife attending to the comfort of her guests, she ordered David to put more wood into the stove.

"Good evening, my neighbors," she said. "Dear Monsieur Becker, you do right to come; you see me living for the last time, perhaps. This winter has killed me. Will you sit there?" she said to Wilfrid. "And you, Minna, here?" pointing to a chair beside her. "I see you have brought your embroidery. Did you invent that stitch? the design is very pretty. For whom is it, — your father, or monsieur?" she added, turning to Wilfrid. "Surely we ought to give him, before we part, a remembrance of the daughters of Norway."

"Did you suffer much yesterday?" asked Wilfrid.

"It was nothing," she answered; "the suffering gladdened me; it was necessary, to enable me to leave this life."

“Then death does not alarm you?” said Monsieur Becker, smiling, for he did not think her ill.

“No, dear pastor; there are two ways of dying: to some, death is victory, to others, defeat.”

“Do you think that you have conquered?” asked Minna.

“I do not know,” she said, “perhaps I have only taken a step in the path.”

The lustrous splendor of her brow grew dim, her eyes were veiled beneath slow-dropping lids; a simple movement which affected the prying guests and kept them silent. Monsieur Becker was the first to recover courage.

“Dear child,” he said, “you are truth itself, and you are ever kind. I would ask of you to-night something other than the dainties of your tea-table. If we may believe certain persons, you know amazing things; if this be true, would it not be charitable in you to solve a few of our doubts?”

“Ah!” she said smiling, “I walk on the clouds. I visit the depths of the fiord; the sea is my steed and I bridle it; I know where the singing flower grows, and the talking light descends, and fragrant colors shine! I wear the seal of Solomon; I am a fairy; I cast my orders to the wind which, like an abject slave, fulfils them; my eyes can pierce the earth and behold its treasures; for lo! am I not the virgin to whom the pearls dart from their ocean depths and—”

“—who led me safely to the summit of the Falberg?” said Minna, interrupting her.

“Thou! thou too!” exclaimed the strange being, with a luminous glance at the young girl which filled her soul with trouble. “Had I not the faculty of reading through your foreheads the desires which have brought you here, should I be what you think I am?” she said, encircling all three with her controlling glance, to David’s great satisfaction. The old man rubbed his hands with pleasure as he left the room.

“Ah!” she resumed after a pause, “you have come, all of you, with the curiosity of children. You, my poor Monsieur Becker, have asked yourself how it was possible that a girl of seventeen should know even a single one of those secrets which men of science seek with their noses to the earth, — instead of raising their eyes to heaven. Were I to tell you how and at what point the plant merges into the animal you would begin to doubt your doubts. You have plotted to question me; you will admit that?”

“Yes, dear Seraphita,” answered Wilfrid; “but the desire is a natural one to men, is it not?”

“You will bore this dear child with such topics,” she said, passing her hand lightly over Minna’s hair with a caressing gesture.

The young girl raised her eyes and seemed as though she longed to lose herself in him.

“Speech is the endowment of us all,” resumed the mysterious creature, gravely. “Woe to him who keeps silence, even in a desert, believing that no one hears him; all voices speak and all ears listen here below. Speech moves the universe. Monsieur Becker,

I desire to say nothing unnecessarily. I know the difficulties that beset your mind; would you not think it a miracle if I were now to lay bare the past history of your consciousness? Well, the miracle shall be accomplished. You have never admitted to yourself the full extent of your doubts. I alone, immovable in my faith, I can show it to you; I can terrify you with yourself.

“ You stand on the darkest side of Doubt. You do not believe in God, — although you know it not, — and all things here below are secondary to him who rejects the first principle of things. Let us leave aside the fruitless discussions of false philosophy. The spiritualist generations made as many and as vain efforts to deny Matter as the materialist generations have made to deny Spirit. Why such discussions? Does not man himself offer irrefragable proof of both systems? Do we not find in him material things and spiritual things? None but a madman can refuse to see in the human body a fragment of Matter; your natural sciences, when they decompose it, find little difference between its elements and those of other animals. On the other hand, the idea produced in man by the comparison of many objects has never seemed to any one to belong to the domain of Matter. As to this, I offer no opinion. I am now concerned with your doubts, not with my certainties. To you, as to the majority of thinkers, the relations between things, the reality of which is proved to you by your sensations and which you possess the faculty to

discover, do not seem Material. The Natural universe of things and beings ends, in man, with the Spiritual universe of similarities or differences which he perceives among the innumerable forms of Nature, — relations so multiplied as to seem infinite ; for if, up to the present time, no one has been able to enumerate the separate terrestrial creations, who can reckon their correlations? Is not the fraction which you know, in relation to their totality, what a single number is to infinity? Here, then, you fall into a perception of the infinite which undoubtedly obliges you to conceive of a purely Spiritual world.

“ Thus man himself offers sufficient proof of the two orders, — Matter and Spirit. In him culminates a visible finite universe ; in him begins a universe invisible and infinite, — two worlds unknown to each other. Have the pebbles of the fiord a perception of their combined being? have they a consciousness of the colors they present to the eye of man? do they hear the music of the waves that lap them? Let us therefore spring over and not attempt to sound the abysmal depths presented to our minds in the union of a Material universe and a Spiritual universe, — a creation visible, ponderable, tangible, terminating in a creation invisible, imponderable, intangible ; completely dissimilar, separated by the void, yet united by indisputable bonds and meeting in a being who derives equally from the one and from the other! Let us mingle in one world these two worlds, absolutely irreconcilable to your philosophies, but conjoined by fact. However abstract man may suppose the relation which

binds two things together, the line of junction is perceptible. How? Where? We are not now in search of the vanishing point where Matter subtilizes. If such were the question, I cannot see why He who has, by physical relations, studded with stars at immeasurable distances the heavens which veil Him, may not have created solid substances, nor why you deny Him the faculty of giving a body to thought.

“ Thus your invisible moral universe and your visible physical universe are one and the same matter. We will not separate properties from substances, nor objects from effects. All that exists, all that presses upon us and overwhelms us from above or from below, before us or in us, all that which our eyes and our minds perceive, all these named and unnamed things compose — in order to fit the problem of Creation to the measure of your logic — a block of finite Matter; but were it infinite, God would still not be its master. Now, reasoning with your views, dear pastor, no matter in what way God the infinite is concerned with this block of finite Matter, He cannot exist and retain the attributes with which man invests Him. Seek Him in facts, and He is not; ask reason to reveal Him, and again He is not; spiritually and materially, you have made God impossible. Listen to the Word of human Reason forced to its ultimate conclusions.

“ In bringing God face to face with the Great Whole, we see that only two states are possible between them, — either God and Matter are contemporaneous, or God existed alone before Matter. Were Reason — the light

that has guided the human race from the dawn of its existence — accumulated in one brain, even that mighty brain could not invent a third mode of being without suppressing both Matter and God. Let human philosophies pile mountain upon mountain of words and of ideas, let religions accumulate images and beliefs, revelations and mysteries, you must face at last this terrible dilemma and choose between the two propositions which compose it; you have no option, and one as much as the other leads human reason to Doubt.

“The problem thus established, what signifies Spirit or Matter? Why trouble about the march of the worlds in one direction or in another, since the Being who guides them is shown to be an absurdity? Why continue to ask whether man is approaching heaven or receding from it, whether creation is rising towards Spirit or descending towards Matter, if the questioned universe gives no reply? What signifies theogonies and their armies, theologies and their dogmas, since whichever side of the problem is man’s choice, his God exists not? Let us for a moment take up the first proposition, and suppose God contemporaneous with Matter. Is subjection to the action or the co-existence of an alien substance consistent with being God at all? In such a system, would not God become a secondary agent compelled to organize Matter? If so, who compelled Him? Between His material gross companion and Himself, who was the arbiter? Who paid the wages of the six days’ labor imputed to the great Designer? Has any determining force been found which was neither

God nor Matter? God being regarded as the manufacturer of the machinery of the worlds, is it not as ridiculous to call Him God as to call the slave who turned a grindstone a Roman citizen? Besides, another difficulty, as insoluble to this supreme human reason as it is to God, presents itself.

“ If we carry the problem higher, shall we not be like the Hindus, who put the world upon a tortoise, the tortoise on an elephant, and do not know on what the feet of their elephant may rest? This supreme will, issuing from the contest between God and Matter, this God, this more than God, can He have existed throughout eternity without willing what He afterwards willed, — admitting that Eternity can be divided into two eras. No matter where God is, what becomes of His intuitive intelligence if He did not know His ultimate thought? Which, then, is the true Eternity, — the created Eternity or the uncreated? But if God throughout all time did will the world such as it is, this new necessity, which harmonizes with the idea of sovereign intelligence, implies the co-eternity of Matter. Whether Matter be co-eternal by a divine will necessarily accordant with itself from the beginning, or whether Matter be co-eternal of its own being, the power of God, which must be absolute, perishes if His will is circumscribed; for in that case God would find within Him a determining force which would control Him. Can He be God if He can no more separate Himself from His creation in a past eternity than in the coming eternity?

“ This face of the problem is insoluble in its cause. Let us now inquire into its effects. If a God compelled to have created the world from all eternity seems inexplicable, He is quite as unintelligible in perpetual cohesion with His work. God, constrained to live eternally united to His creation is held down to His first position as workman. Can you conceive of a God who shall be neither independent of nor dependent on His work? Could He destroy that work without challenging Himself? Ask yourself, and decide! Whether He destroys it some day, or whether He never destroys it, either way is fatal to the attributes without which God cannot exist. Is the world an experiment? is it a perishable form to which destruction must come? If it is, is not God inconsistent and impotent? inconsistent, because He ought to have seen the result before the attempt, — moreover why should He delay to destroy that which He is to destroy? — impotent, for how else could He have created an imperfect man?

“ If an imperfect creation contradicts the faculties which man attributes to God we are forced back upon the question, Is creation perfect? The idea is in harmony with that of a God supremely intelligent who could make no mistakes; but then, what means the degradation of His work, and its regeneration? Moreover, a perfect world is, necessarily, indestructible; its forms would not perish, it could neither advance nor recede, it would revolve in the everlasting circumference from which it would never issue. In that case God would be dependent on His work; it would be co-

eternal with Him; and so we fall back into one of the propositions most antagonistic to God. If the world is imperfect, it can progress; if perfect, it is stationary. On the other hand, if it be impossible to admit of a progressive God ignorant through a past eternity of the results of His creative work, can there be a stationary God? would not that imply the triumph of Matter? would it not be the greatest of all negations? Under the first hypothesis God perishes through weakness; under the second through the force of His inertia.

“Therefore, to all sincere minds the supposition that Matter, in the conception and execution of the worlds, is contemporaneous with God, is to deny God. Forced to choose, in order to govern the nations, between the two alternatives of the problem, whole generations have preferred this solution of it. Hence the doctrine of the two principles of Magianism, brought from Asia and adopted in Europe under the form of Satan warring with the Eternal Father. But this religious formula and the innumerable aspects of divinity that have sprung from it are surely crimes against the Majesty Divine. What other term can we apply to the belief which sets up as a rival to God a personification of Evil, striving eternally against the Omnipotent Mind without the possibility of ultimate triumph? Your statics declare that two Forces thus pitted against each other are reciprocally rendered null.

“Do you turn back, therefore, to the other side of the problem, and say that God pre-existed, original, alone?

“I will not go over the preceding arguments (which here return in full force) as to the severance of Eternity into two parts; nor the questions raised by the progression or the immobility of the worlds; let us look only at the difficulties inherent to this second theory. If God pre-existed alone, the world must have emanated from Him; Matter was therefore drawn from His essence; consequently Matter in itself is non-existent; all forms are veils to cover the Divine Spirit. If this be so, the World is Eternal, and also it must be God. Is not this proposition even more fatal than the former to the attributes conferred on God by human reason? How can the actual condition of Matter be explained if we suppose it to issue from the bosom of God and to be ever united with Him? Is it possible to believe that the All-Powerful, supremely good in His essence and in His faculties, has engendered things dissimilar to Himself. Must He not in all things and through all things be like unto Himself? Can there be in God certain evil parts of which at some future day he may rid Himself? — a conjecture less offensive and absurd than terrible, for the reason that it drags back into Him the two principles which the preceding theory proved to be inadmissible. God must be ONE; He cannot be divided without renouncing the most important condition of His existence. It is therefore impossible to admit of a fraction of God which yet is not God. This hypothesis seemed so criminal to the Roman Church that she has made the omnipresence of God in the least particles of the Eucharist an article of faith.

“But how then can we imagine an omnipotent mind which does not triumph? How associate it unless in triumph with Nature? But Nature is not triumphant; she seeks, combines, remodels, dies, and is born again; she is even more convulsed when creating than when all was fusion; Nature suffers, groans, is ignorant, degenerates, does evil; deceives herself, annihilates herself, disappears, and begins again. If God is associated with Nature, how can we explain the inoperative indifference of the divine principle? Wherefore death? How came it that Evil, king of the earth, was born of a God supremely good in His essence and in His faculties, who can produce nothing that is not made in His own image?

“But if, from this relentless conclusion which leads at once to absurdity, we pass to details, what end are we to assign to the world? If all is God, all is reciprocally cause and effect; all is ONE as God is ONE, and we can perceive neither points of likeness nor points of difference. Can the real end be a rotation of Matter which subtilizes and disappears? In whatever sense it were done, would not this mechanical trick of Matter issuing from God and returning to God seem a sort of child’s play? Why should God make himself gross with Matter? Under which form is he most God? Which has the ascendant, Matter or Spirit, when neither can in any way do wrong? Who can comprehend the Deity engaged in this perpetual business, by which he divides Himself into two Natures, one of which knows nothing, while the other knows all? Can you

conceive of God amusing Himself in the form of man, laughing at His own efforts, dying Friday, to be born again Sunday, and continuing this play from age to age, knowing the end from all eternity, and telling nothing to Himself, the Creature, of what He the Creator, does? The God of the preceding hypothesis, a God so nugatory by the very power of His inertia, seems the more possible of the two if we are compelled to choose between the impossibilities with which this God, so dull a jester, fusillades Himself when two sections of humanity argue face to face, weapons in hand.

“However absurd this outcome of the second problem may seem, it was adopted by half the human race in the sunny lands where smiling mythologies were created. Those amorous nations were consistent; with them all was God, even Fear and its dastardy, even crime and its bacchanals. If we accept pantheism, — the religion of many a great human genius, — who shall say where the greater reason lies? Is it with the savage, free in the desert, clothed in his nudity, listening to the sun, talking to the sea, sublime and always true in his deeds whatever they may be; or shall we find it in civilized man, who derives his chief enjoyments through lies; who wrings Nature and all her resources to put a musket on his shoulder; who employs his intellect to hasten the hour of his death and to create diseases out of pleasures? When the rake of pestilence and the ploughshare of war and the demon of desolation have passed over a corner of the globe and obliterated all things, who will be found to have the greater reason, —

the Nubian savage or the patrician of Thebes? Your doubts descend the scale, they go from heights to depths, they embrace all, the end as well as the means.

“But if the physical world seems inexplicable, the moral world presents still stronger arguments against God. Where, then, is progress? If all things are indeed moving toward perfection why do we die young? why do not nations perpetuate themselves? The world having issued from God and being contained in God can it be stationary? Do we live once, or do we live always? If we live once, hurried onward by the march of the Great-Whole, a knowledge of which has not been given to us, let us act as we please. If we are eternal, let things take their course. Is the created being guilty if he exists at the instant of the transitions? If he sins at the moment of a great transformation will he be punished for it after being its victim? What becomes of the Divine goodness if we are not transferred to the regions of the blest—should any such exist? What becomes of God’s prescience if He is ignorant of the results of the trials to which He subjects us? What is this alternative offered to man by all religions, — either to boil in some eternal cauldron or to walk in white robes, a palm in his hand and a halo round his head? Can it be that this pagan invention is the final word of God? Where is the generous soul who does not feel that the calculating virtue which seeks the eternity of pleasure offered by all religions to whoever fulfils at stray moments certain fanciful

and often unnatural conditions, is unworthy of man and of God? Is it not a mockery to give to man impetuous senses and forbid him to satisfy them? Besides, what mean these ascetic objections if Good and Evil are equally abolished? Does Evil exist? If substance in all its forms is God, then Evil is God. The faculty of reasoning as well as the faculty of feeling having been given to man to use, nothing can be more excusable in him than to seek to know the meaning of human suffering and the prospects of the future.

“If these rigid and rigorous arguments lead to such conclusions confusion must reign. The world would have no fixedness; nothing would advance, nothing would pause, all would change, nothing would be destroyed, all would reappear after self-renovation; for if your mind does not clearly demonstrate to you an end, it is equally impossible to demonstrate the destruction of the smallest particle of Matter; Matter can transform but not annihilate itself.

“Though blind force may provide arguments for the atheist, intelligent force is inexplicable; for if it emanates from God, why should it meet with obstacles? ought not its triumph to be immediate? Where is God? If the living cannot perceive Him, can the dead find Him? Crumble, ye idolatries and ye religions! Fall, feeble keystones of all social arches, powerless to retard the decay, the death, the oblivion that have overtaken all nations however firmly founded! Fall, morality and justice! our crimes are purely relative: they are divine effects whose causes we are not allowed

to know. All is God. Either we are God or God is not! — Child of a century whose every year has laid upon your brow, old man, the ice of its unbelief, here, here is the summing up of your lifetime of thought, of your science and your reflections! Dear Monsieur Becker, you have laid your head on the pillow of Doubt, because it is the easiest of solutions; acting in this respect with the majority of mankind, who say in their hearts: ‘Let us think no more of these problems, since God has not vouchsafed to grant us the algebraic demonstrations that could solve them, while He has given us so many other ways to get from earth to heaven.’

“Tell me, dear pastor, are not these your secret thoughts? Have I evaded the point of any? nay, rather, have I not clearly stated all? First, in the dogma of two principles,—an antagonism in which God perishes for the reason that being All-Powerful He chose to combat. Secondly, in the absurd pantheism where, all being God, God exists no longer. These two sources, from which have flowed all the religions for whose triumph Earth has toiled and prayed, are equally pernicious. Behold in them the double-bladed axe with which you decapitate the white old man whom you enthrone among your painted clouds! And now, to me the axe I wield it!”

Monsieur Becker and Wilfrid gazed at the young girl with something like terror.

“To believe,” continued Seraphita, in her Woman’s voice, for the Man had finished speaking, “to believe

is a gift. To believe is to feel. To believe in God we must feel God. This feeling is a possession slowly acquired by the human being, just as other astonishing powers which you admire in great men, warriors, artists, scholars, those who know and those who act, are acquired. Thought, that budget of the relations which you perceive among created things, is an intellectual language which can be learned, is it not? Belief, the budget of celestial truths, is also a language as superior to thought as thought is to instinct. This language also can be learned. The Believer answers with a single cry, a single gesture; Faith puts within his hand a flaming sword with which he pierces and illumines all. The Seer attains to heaven and descends not. But there are beings who believe and see, who know and will, who love and pray and wait. Submissive, yet aspiring to the kingdom of light, they have neither the aloofness of the Believer nor the silence of the Seer; they listen and reply. To them the doubt of the twilight ages is not a murderous weapon, but a divining rod; they accept the contest under every form; they train their tongues to every language; they are never angered, though they groan; the acrimony of the aggressor is not in them, but rather the softness and tenuity of light, which penetrates and warms and illumines. To their eyes Doubt is neither an impiety, nor a blasphemy, nor a crime, but a transition through which men return upon their steps in the Darkness, or advance into the Light: This being so, dear pastor, let us reason together.

“ You do not believe in God? Why? God, to your thinking, is incomprehensible, inexplicable. Agreed. I will not reply that to comprehend God in His entirety would be to be God; nor will I tell you that you deny what seems to you inexplicable so as to give me the right to affirm that which to me is believable. There is, for you, one evident fact, which lies within yourself. In you, Matter has ended in intelligence; can you therefore think that human intelligence will end in darkness, doubt, and nothingness? God may seem to you incomprehensible and inexplicable, but you must admit Him to be, in all things purely physical, a splendid and consistent workman. Why should His craft stop short at man, His most finished creation?

“ If that question is not convincing, at least it compels meditation. Happily, although you deny God, you are obliged, in order to establish your doubts, to admit those double-bladed facts, which kill your arguments as much as your arguments kill God. We have also admitted that Matter and Spirit are two creations which do not comprehend each other; that the spiritual world is formed of infinite relations to which the finite material world has given rise; that if no one on earth is able to identify himself by the power of his spirit with the great-whole of terrestrial creations, still less is he able to rise to the knowledge of the relations which the spirit perceives between these creations.

“ We might end the argument here in one word, by denying you the faculty of comprehending God, just as you deny to the pebbles of the fiord the faculties

of counting and of seeing each other. How do you know that the stones themselves do not deny the existence of man, though man makes use of them to build his houses? There is one fact that appals you, — the Infinite; if you feel it within you, why will you not admit its consequences? Can the finite have a perfect knowledge of the infinite? If you cannot perceive those relations which, according to your own admission, are infinite, how can you grasp a sense of the far-off end to which they are converging? Order, the revelation of which is one of your needs, being infinite, can your limited reason apprehend it? Do not ask why man does not comprehend that which he is able to perceive, for he is equally able to perceive that which he does not comprehend. If I prove to you that your mind ignores that which lies within its compass, will you grant that it is impossible for it to conceive whatever is beyond it? This being so, am I not justified in saying to you: ‘One of the two propositions under which God is annihilated before the tribunal of our reason must be true, the other is false. Inasmuch as creation exists, you feel the necessity of an end, and that end should be good, should it not? Now, if Matter terminates in man by intelligence, why are you not satisfied to believe that the end of human intelligence is the Light of the higher spheres, where alone an intuition of that God who seems to you so insoluble a problem is obtained? The species which are beneath you have no conception of the universe, and you have; why should there not be other species above you more

intelligent than your own? Man ought to be better informed than he is about himself before he spends his strength in measuring God. Before attacking the stars that light us, and the higher certainties, ought he not to understand the certainties which are actually about him?’

“But no! to the negations of doubt I ought rather to reply by negations. Therefore I ask you whether there is anything here below so evident that I can put faith in it? I will show you in a moment that you believe firmly in things which act, and yet are not beings; in things which engender thought, and yet are not spirits; in living abstractions which the understanding cannot grasp in any shape, which are in fact nowhere, but which you perceive everywhere; which have, and can have, no name, but which, nevertheless, you have named; and which, like the God of flesh whom you figure to yourself, remain inexplicable, incomprehensible, and absurd. I shall also ask you why, after admitting the existence of these incomprehensible things, you reserve your doubts for God?

“You believe, for instance, in Number, — a base on which you have built the edifice of sciences which you call ‘exact.’ Without Number, what would become of mathematics? Well, what mysterious being endowed with the faculty of living forever could utter, and what language would he compact to word the Number which contains the infinite numbers whose existence is revealed to you by thought? Ask it of the loftiest human genius; he might ponder it for a thousand

years and what would be his answer? You know neither where Number begins, nor where it pauses, nor where it ends. Here you call it Time, there you call it Space. Nothing exists except by Number. Without it, all would be one and the same substance; for Number alone differentiates and qualifies substance. Number is to your Spirit what it is to Matter, an incomprehensible agent. Will you make a Deity of it? Is it a being? Is it a breath emanating from God to organize the material universe where nothing obtains form except by the Divinity which is an effect of Number? The least as well as the greatest of creations are distinguishable from each other by quantities, qualities, dimensions, forces, — all attributes created by Number. The infinitude of Numbers is a fact proved to your soul, but of which no material proof can be given. The mathematician himself tells you that the infinite of numbers exists, but cannot be proved.

“God, dear pastor, is a Number endowed with motion, — felt, but not seen, the Believer will tell you. Like the Unit, He begins Numbers, with which He has nothing in common. The existence of Number depends on the Unit, which without being a number engenders Number. God, dear pastor, is a glorious Unit who has nothing in common with His creations but who, nevertheless, engenders them. Will you not therefore agree with me that you are just as ignorant of where Number begins and ends as you are of where created Eternity begins and ends?

“Why, then, if you believe in Number, do you deny

God? Is not Creation interposed between the Infinite of unorganized substances and the Infinite of the divine spheres, just as the Unit stands between the Cipher of the fractions you have lately named Decimals, and the Infinite of Numbers which you call Wholes? Man alone on earth comprehends Number, that first step of the peristyle which leads to God, and yet his reason stumbles on it! What! you can neither measure nor grasp the first abstraction which God delivers to you, and yet you try to subject His ends to your own tape-line! Suppose that I plunge you into the abyss of Motion, the force that organizes Number. If I tell you that the Universe is naught else than Number and Motion, you would see at once that we speak two different languages. I understand them both; you understand neither.

“ Suppose I add that Motion and Number are engendered by the Word, namely the supreme Reason of Seers and Prophets who in the olden time heard the Breath of God beneath which Saul fell to the earth. That Word, you scoff at it, you men, although you well know that all visible works, societies, monuments, deeds, passions, proceed from the breath of your own feeble word, and that without that word you would resemble the African gorilla, the nearest approach to man, the negro. You believe firmly in Number and in Motion, a force and a result both inexplicable, incomprehensible, to the existence of which I may apply the logical dilemma which, as we have seen, prevents you from believing in God. Powerful reasoner that you

are, you do not need that I should prove to you that the Infinite must everywhere be like unto Itself, and that, necessarily, it is One. God alone is Infinite, for surely there cannot be two Infinities, two Ones. If, to make use of human terms, anything demonstrated to you here below seems to you infinite, be sure that within it you will find some one aspect of God. But to continue.

“ You have appropriated to yourself a place in the Infinite of Number; you have fitted it to your own proportions by creating (if indeed you did create) arithmetic, the basis on which all things rest, even your societies. Just as Number—the only thing in which your self-styled atheists believe—organized physical creations, so arithmetic, in the employ of Number, organized the moral world. This numeration must be absolute, like all else that is true in itself; but it is purely relative, it does not exist absolutely, and no proof can be given of its reality. In the first place, though Numeration is able to take account of organized substances, it is powerless in relation to unorganized forces, the ones being finite and the others infinite. The man who can conceive the Infinite by his intelligence cannot deal with it in its entirety; if he could, he would be God. Your Numeration, applying to things finite and not to the Infinite, is therefore true in relation to the details which you are able to perceive, and false in relation to the Whole, which you are unable to perceive. Though Nature is like unto herself in the organizing forces or in her principles which are infinite, she is not

so in her finite effects. Thus you will never find in Nature two objects identically alike. In the Natural Order two and two never make four; to do so, four exactly similar units must be had, and you know how impossible it is to find two leaves alike on the same tree, or two trees alike of the same species. This axiom of your numeration, false in visible nature, is equally false in the invisible universe of your abstractions, where the same variance takes place in your ideas, which are the things of the visible world extended by means of their relations; so that the variations here are even more marked than elsewhere. In fact, all being relative to the temperament, strength, habits, and customs of individuals, who never resemble each other, the smallest objects take the color of personal feelings. For instance, man has been able to create units and to give an equal weight and value to bits of gold. Well, take the ducat of the rich man and the ducat of the poor man to a money-changer and they are rated exactly equal, but to the mind of the thinker one is of greater importance than the other; one represents a month of comfort, the other an ephemeral caprice. Two and two, therefore, only make four through a false conception.

“ Again: fraction does not exist in Nature, where what you call a fragment is a finished whole. Does it not often happen (have you not many proofs of it?) that the hundredth part of a substance is stronger than what you term the whole of it? If fraction does not exist in the Natural Order, still less shall we find it in the Moral Order, where ideas and sentiments may be

as varied as the species of the Vegetable kingdom and yet be always whole. The theory of fractions is therefore another signal instance of the servility of your mind.

“Thus Number, with its infinite minuteness and its infinite expansion, is a power whose weakest side is known to you, but whose real import escapes your perception. You have built yourself a hut in the Infinite of numbers, you have adorned it with hieroglyphics scientifically arranged and painted, and you cry out, ‘All is here!’

“Let us pass from pure, unmingled Number to corporate Number. Your geometry establishes that a straight line is the shortest way from one point to another, but your astronomy proves that God has proceeded by curves. Here, then, we find two truths equally proved by the same science, — one by the testimony of your senses reinforced by the telescope, the other by the testimony of your mind; and yet the one contradicts the other. Man, liable to err, affirms one, and the Maker of the worlds, whom, so far, you have not detected in error, contradicts it. Who shall decide between rectilinear and curvilinear geometry? between the theory of the straight line and that of the curve? If, in His vast work, the mysterious Artificer, who knows how to reach His ends miraculously fast, never employs a straight line except to cut off an angle and so obtain a curve, neither does man himself always rely upon it. The bullet which he aims direct proceeds by a curve, and when you wish to strike a certain point in space,

you impel your bombshell along its cruel parabola. None of your men of science have drawn from this fact the simple deduction that the Curve is the law of the material worlds and the Straight line that of the Spiritual worlds; one is the theory of finite creations, the other the theory of the infinite. Man, who alone in this world has a knowledge of the Infinite, can alone know the straight line; he alone has the sense of verticality placed in a special organ. A fondness for the creations of the curve would seem to be in certain men an indication of the impurity of their nature still conjoined to the material substances which engender us; and the love of great souls for the straight line seems to show in them an intuition of heaven. Between these two lines there is a gulf fixed like that between the finite and the infinite, between matter and spirit, between man and the idea, between motion and the object moved, between the creature and God. Ask Love the Divine to grant you his wings and you can cross that gulf. Beyond it begins the revelation of the Word.

“No part of those things which you call material is without its own meaning; lines are the boundaries of solid parts and imply a force of action which you suppress in your formulas, — thus rendering those formulas false in relation to substances taken as a whole. Hence the constant destruction of the monuments of human labor, which you supply, unknown to yourselves, with acting properties. Nature has substances; your science combines only their appearances. At every step Nature gives the lie to all your laws. Can you find

a single one that is not disproved by a fact? Your Static laws are at the mercy of a thousand accidents; a fluid can overthrow a solid mountain and prove that the heaviest substances may be lifted by one that is imponderable.

“Your laws on Aconstics and Optics are defied by the sounds which you hear within yourselves in sleep, and by the light of an electric sun whose rays often overcome you. You know no more how light makes itself seen within you, than you know the simple and natural process which changes it on the throats of tropic birds to rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and opals, or keeps it gray and brown on the breasts of the same birds under the cloudy skies of Europe, or whitens it here in the bosom of our polar Nature. You know not how to decide whether color is a faculty with which all substances are endowed, or an effect produced by an effluence of light. You admit the saltness of the sea without being able to prove that the water is salt at its greatest depth. You recognize the existence of various substances which span what you think to be the void, — substances which are not tangible under any of the forms assumed by Matter, although they put themselves in harmony with Matter in spite of every obstacle.

“All this being so, you believe in the results of Chemistry, although that science still knows no way of gauging the changes produced by the flux and reflux of substances which come and go across your crystals and your instruments on the impalpable filaments of

heat or light conducted and projected by the affinities of metal or vitrified flint. You obtain none but dead substances, from which you have driven the unknown force that holds in check the decomposition of all things here below, and of which cohesion, attraction, vibration, and polarity are but phenomena. Life is the thought of substances; bodies are only the means of fixing life and holding it to its way. If bodies were beings living of themselves they would be Cause itself, and could not die.

“ When a man discovers the results of the general movement, which is shared by all creations according to their faculty of absorption, you proclaim him mighty in science, as though genius consisted in explaining a thing that is! Genius ought to cast its eyes beyond effects. Your men of science would laugh if you said to them: ‘There exist such positive relations between two human beings, one of whom may be here, and the other in Java, that they can at the same instant feel the same sensation, and be conscious of so doing; they can question each other and reply without mistake;’ and yet there are mineral substances which exhibit sympathies as far off from each other as those of which I speak. You believe in the power of the electricity which you find in the magnet and you deny that which emanates from the soul! According to you, the moon, whose influence upon the tides you think fixed, has none whatever upon the winds, nor upon navigation, nor upon men; she moves the sea, but she must not affect the sick folk; she has undeniable relations with one

half of humanity, and nothing at all to do with the other half. These are your vaunted certainties!

“ Let us go a step further. You believe in physics. But your physics begin, like the Catholic religion, with an *act of faith*. Do they not pre-suppose some external force distinct from substance to which it communicates motion? You see its effects, but what is it? where is it? what is the essence of its nature, its life? has it any limits? — and yet, you deny God!

“ Thus, the majority of your scientific axioms, true in their relation to man, are false in relation to the Great Whole. Science is One, but you have divided it. To know the real meaning of the laws of phenomena must we not know the correlations which exist between phenomena and the law of the Whole? There is, in all things, an appearance which strikes your senses; under that appearance stirs a soul; a body is there and a faculty is there. Where do you teach the study of the relations which bind things to each other? Nowhere. Consequently you have nothing positive. Your strongest certainties rest upon the analysis of material forms whose essence you persistently ignore.

“ There is a Higher Knowledge of which, too late, some men obtain a glimpse, though they dare not avow it. Such men comprehend the necessity of considering substances not merely in their mathematical properties but also in their entirety, in their occult relations and affinities. The greatest man among you divined, in his latter days, that all was reciprocally cause and effect;

that the visible worlds were co-ordinated among themselves and subject to worlds invisible. He groaned at the recollection of having tried to establish fixed precepts. Counting up his worlds, like grape-seeds scattered through ether, he had explained their coherence by the laws of planetary and molecular attraction. You bowed before that man of science — well ! I tell you that he died in despair. By supposing that the centrifugal and centripetal forces, which he had invented to explain to himself the universe, were equal, he stopped the universe ; yet he admitted motion in an indeterminate sense ; but supposing those forces unequal, then utter confusion of the planetary system ensued. His laws therefore were not absolute ; some higher problem existed than the principle on which his false glory rested. The connection of the stars with one another and the centripetal action of their internal motion did not deter him from seeking the parent stalk on which his clusters hung. Alas, poor man ! the more he widened space the heavier his burden grew. He told you how there came to be equilibrium among the parts, but whither went the whole ? His mind contemplated the vast extent, illimitable to human eyes, filled with those groups of worlds a mere fraction of which is all our telescopes can reach, but whose immensity is revealed by the rapidity of light. This sublime contemplation enabled him to perceive myriads of worlds, planted in space like flowers in a field, which are born like infants, grow like men, die as the aged die, and live by assimilating from their atmosphere the substances suitable for their nourish-

ment, — having a centre and a principal of life, guaranteeing to each other their circuits, absorbed and absorbing like plants, and forming a vast Whole endowed with life and possessing a destiny.

“ At that sight your man of science trembled! He knew that life is produced by the union of the thing and its principle, that death or inertia or gravity is produced by a rupture between a thing and the movement which appertains to it. Then it was that he foresaw the crumbling of the worlds and their destruction if God should withdraw the Breath of his Word. He searched the Apocalypse for the traces of that Word. You thought him mad. Understand him better! He was seeking pardon for the work of his genius.

“ Wilfrid, you have come here hoping to make me solve equations, or rise upon a rain-cloud, or plunge into the fiord and reappear a swan. If science or miracles were the end and object of humanity, Moses would have bequeathed to you the law of fluxions; Jesus Christ would have lightened the darkness of your sciences; his apostles would have told you whence come those vast trains of gas and melted metals, attached to cores which revolve and solidify as they dart through ether, or violently enter some system and combine with a star, jostling and displacing it by the shock, or destroying it by the infiltration of their deadly gases; Saint Paul, instead of telling you to live in God, would have explained why food is the secret bond among all creations and the evident tie between all living Species. In these days the greatest miracle of all would be the discovery

of the squaring of the circle, — a problem which you hold to be insoluble, but which is doubtless solved in the march of worlds by the intersection of some mathematical lines whose course is visible to the eye of spirits who have reached the higher spheres. Believe me, miracles are in us, not without us. Here natural facts occur which men call supernatural. God would have been strangely unjust had he confined the testimony of his power to certain generations and peoples and denied them to others. The brazen rod belongs to all. Neither Moses, nor Jacob, nor Zoroaster, nor Paul, nor Pythagoras, nor Swedenborg, not the humblest Messenger nor the loftiest Prophet of the Most High are greater than you are capable of being. Only, there come to nations as to men certain periods when Faith is theirs.

“If material science be the end and object of human effort, tell me, both of you, would societies, — those great centres where men congregate, — would they perpetually be dispersed? If civilization were the object of our Species, would intelligence perish? would it continue purely individual? The grandeur of all nations that were truly great was based on exceptions; when the exception ceased their power died. If such were the End-all, Prophets, Seers, and Messengers of God would have lent their hand to Science rather than have given it to Belief. Surely they would have quickened your brains sooner than have touched your hearts! But no; one and all they came to lead the nations back to God; they proclaimed the sacred Path in simple words that showed the way to heaven; all were wrapped

in love and faith, all were inspired by that **WORD** which hovers above the inhabitants of earth, enfolding them, inspiring them, uplifting them; none were prompted by any human interest. Your great geniuses, your poets, your kings, your learned men are engulfed with their cities; while the names of these good pastors of humanity, ever blessed, have survived all cataclysms.

“Alas! we cannot understand each other on any point. We are separated by an abyss. You are on the side of darkness, while I—I live in the light, the true Light! Is this the word that you ask of me? I say it with joy; it may change you. Know this: there are sciences of matter and sciences of spirit. There, where you see substances, I see forces that stretch one toward another with generating power. To me, the character of bodies is the indication of their principles and the sign of their properties. Those principles beget affinities which escape your knowledge, and which are linked to centres. The different species among which life is distributed are unfailing streams which correspond unfailingly among themselves. Each has his own vocation. Man is effect and cause. He is fed, but he feeds in his turn. When you call God a Creator, you dwarf Him. He did not create, as you think He did, plants or animals or stars. Could He proceed by a variety of means? Must He not act by unity of composition? Moreover, He gave forth principles to be developed, according to His universal law, at the will of the surroundings in which they were placed. Hence a single substance and motion, a single plant, a single

animal, but correlations everywhere. In fact, all affinities are linked together by contiguous similitudes; the life of the worlds is drawn toward the centres by famished aspiration, as you are drawn by hunger to seek food.

“To give you an example of affinities linked to similitudes (a secondary law on which the creations of your thought are based), music, that celestial art, is the working out of this principle; for is it not a complement of sounds harmonized by number? Is not sound a modification of air, compressed, dilated, echoed? You know the composition of air, — oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon. As you cannot obtain sound from the void, it is plain that music and the human voice are the result of organized chemical substances, which put themselves in unison with the same substances prepared within you by your thought, co-ordinated by means of light, the great nourisher of your globe. Have you ever meditated on the masses of nitre deposited by the snow, have you ever observed a thunderstorm and seen the plants breathing in from the air about them the metal it contains, without concluding that the sun has fused and distributed the subtle essence which nourishes all things here below? Swedenborg has said, ‘The earth is a man.’

“Your Science, which makes you great in your own eyes, is paltry indeed beside the light which bathes a Seer. Cease, cease to question me; our languages are different. For a moment I have used yours to cast, if it be possible, a ray of faith into your soul; to give

you, as it were, the hem of my garment and draw you up into the regions of Prayer. Can God abase Himself to you? Is it not for you to rise to Him? If human reason finds the ladder of its own strength too weak to bring God down to it, is it not evident that you must find some other path to reach Him? That Path is in ourselves. The Seer and the Believer find eyes within their souls more piercing far than eyes that probe the things of earth, — they see the Dawn. Hear this truth: Your science, let it be never so exact, your meditations, however bold, your noblest lights are Clouds. Above, above is the Sanctuary whence the true Light flows.”

She sat down and remained silent; her calm face bore no sign of the agitation which orators betray after their least fervid improvisations.

Wilfrid bent toward Monsieur Becker and said in a low voice, “Who taught her that?”

“I do not know,” he answered.

“He was gentler on the Falberg,” Minna whispered to herself.

Seraphita passed her hand across her eyes and then said, smiling: —

“You are very thoughtful to-night, gentlemen. You treat Minna and me as though we were men to whom you must talk politics or commerce; whereas we are young girls, and you ought to tell us tales while you drink your tea. That is what we do, Monsieur Wilfrid, in our long Norwegian evenings. Come, dear pastor, tell me some Saga that I have not heard, — that of

Frithiof, the chronicle that you believe and have so often promised me. Tell us the story of the peasant lad who owned the ship that talked and had a soul. Come! I dream of the frigate *Ellida*, the fairy with the sails young girls should navigate!"

"Since we have returned to the regions of Jarvis," said Wilfrid, whose eyes were fastened on Seraphita as those of a robber, lurking in the darkness, fasten on the spot where he knows the jewels lie, "tell me why you do not marry?"

"You are all born widows and widowers," she replied; "but my marriage was arranged at my birth. I am betrothed."

"To whom?" they cried.

"Ask not my secret," she said; "I will promise, if our father permits it, to invite you to these mysterious nuptials."

"Will they be soon?"

"I think so."

A long silence followed these words.

"The spring has come!" said Seraphita, suddenly. "The noise of the waters and the breaking of the ice begins. Come, let us welcome the first spring of the new century."

She rose, followed by Wilfrid, and together they went to a window which David had opened. After the long silence of winter, the waters stirred beneath the ice and resounded through the fiord like music,—for there are sounds which space refines, so that they reach the ear in waves of light and freshness.

“Wilfrid, cease to nourish evil thoughts whose triumph would be hard to bear. Your desires are easily read in the fire of your eyes. Be kind; take one step forward in well-doing. Advance beyond the love of man and sacrifice yourself completely to the happiness of her you love. Obey me; I will lead you in a path where you shall obtain the distinctions which you crave, and where Love is infinite indeed.”

She left him thoughtful.

“That soft creature!” he said within himself; “is she indeed the prophetess whose eyes have just flashed lightnings, whose voice has rung through worlds, whose hand has wielded the axe of doubt against our sciences? Have we been dreaming? Am I awake?”

“Minna,” said Seraphitus, returning to the young girl, “the eagle swoops where the carrion lies, but the dove seeks the mountain spring beneath the peaceful greenery of the glades. The eagle soars to heaven, the dove descends from it. Cease to venture into regions where thou canst find no spring of waters, no umbrageous shade. If on the Falberg thou couldst not gaze into the abyss and live, keep all thy strength for him who will love thee. Go, poor girl; thou knowest, I am betrothed.”

Minna rose and followed Seraphitus to the window where Wilfrid stood. All three listened to the Sieg bounding under the rush of the upper waters, which brought down trees uprooted by the ice; the fiord had regained its voice; all illusions were dispelled! They rejoiced in Nature as she burst her bonds and seemed

to answer with sublime accord to the Spirit whose breath had wakened her.

When the three guests of this mysterious being left the house, they were filled with the vague sensation which is neither sleep, nor torpor, nor astonishment, but partakes of the nature of each, — a state that is neither dusk nor dawn, but which creates a thirst for light. All three were thinking.

“ I begin to believe that she is indeed a Spirit hidden in human form,” said Monsieur Becker.

Wilfrid, re-entering his own apartments, calm and convinced, was unable to struggle against that influence so divinely majestic.

Minna said in her heart, “ Why will he not let me love him ! ”

V.

FAREWELL.

THERE is in man an almost hopeless phenomenon for thoughtful minds who seek a meaning in the march of civilization, and who endeavor to give laws of progression to the movement of intelligence. However portentous a fact may be, or even supernatural, — if such facts exist, — however solemnly a miracle may be done in sight of all, the lightning of that fact, the thunderbolt of that miracle is quickly swallowed up in the ocean of life, whose surface, scarcely stirred by the brief convulsion, returns to the level of its habitual flow.

A Voice is heard from the jaws of an Animal; a Hand writes on the wall before a feasting Court; an Eye gleams in the slumber of a king, and a Prophet explains the dream; Death, evoked, rises on the confines of the luminous sphere where faculties revive; Spirit annihilates Matter at the foot of that mystic ladder of the Seven Spiritual Worlds, one resting upon another in space and revealing themselves in shining waves that break in light upon the steps of the celestial Tabernacle. But however solemn the inward Revelation, however clear the visible outward Sign, be sure that on the morrow Balaam doubts both him-

self and his ass, Belshazzar and Pharoah call Moses and Daniel to qualify the Word. The Spirit, descending, bears man above this earth, opens the seas and lets him see their depths, shows him lost species, wakens dry bones whose dust is the soil of valleys; the Apostle writes the Apocalypse, and twenty centuries later human science ratifies his words and turns his visions into maxims. And what comes of it all? Why this, — that the peoples live as they have ever lived, as they lived in the first Olympiad, as they lived on the morrow of Creation, and on the eve of the great cataclysm. The waves of Doubt have covered all things. The same floods surge with the same measured motion on the human granite which serves as a boundary to the ocean of intelligence. When man has inquired of himself whether he has seen that which he has seen, whether he has heard the words that entered his ears, whether the facts were facts and the idea is indeed an idea, then he resumes his wonted bearing, thinks of his worldly interests, obeys some envoy of death and of oblivion whose dusky mantle covers like a pall an ancient Humanity of which the moderns retain no memory. Man never pauses; he goes his round, he vegetates until the appointed day when his Axe falls. If this wave force, this pressure of bitter waters prevents all progress, no doubt it also warns of death. Spirits prepared by faith among the higher souls of earth can alone perceive the mystic ladder of Jacob.

After listening to Seraphita's answer in which (being

earnestly questioned) she unrolled before their eyes a Divine Perspective, — as an organ fills a church with sonorous sound and reveals a musical universe, its solemn tones rising to the loftiest arches and playing, like light, upon their foliated capitals, — Wilfrid returned to his own room, awed by the sight of a world in ruins, and on those ruins the brilliance of mysterious lights poured forth in torrents by the hand of a young girl. On the morrow he still thought of these things, but his awe was gone; he felt he was neither destroyed nor changed; his passions, his ideas awoke in full force, fresh and vigorous. He went to breakfast with Monsieur Becker and found the old man absorbed in the “Treatise on Incantations,” which he had searched since early morning to convince his guest that there was nothing unprecedented in all that they had seen and heard at the Swedish castle. With the childlike trustfulness of a true scholar he had folded down the pages in which Jean Wier related authentic facts which proved the possibility of the events that had happened the night before, — for to learned men an idea is an event, just as the greatest events often present no idea at all to them. By the time they had swallowed their fifth cup of tea, these philosophers had come to think the mysterious scene of the preceding evening wholly natural. The celestial truths to which they had listened were arguments susceptible of examination; Seraphita was a girl, more or less eloquent; allowance must be made for the charms of her voice, her seductive beauty, her fascinating motions, in short, for all those oratorical

arts by which an actor puts a world of sentiment and thought into phrases which are often commonplace.

“Bah!” said the worthy pastor, making a philosophical grimace as he spread a layer of salt butter on his slice of bread, “the final word of all these fine enigmas is six feet under ground.”

“But,” said Wilfrid, sugaring his tea, “I cannot imagine how a young girl of seventeen can know so much; what she said was certainly a compact argument.”

“Read the account of that Italian woman,” said Monsieur Becker, “who at the age of twelve spoke forty-two languages, ancient and modern; also the history of that monk who could guess thought by smell. I can give you a thousand such cases from Jean Wier and other writers.”

“I admit all that, dear pastor; but to my thinking, Seraphita would make a perfect wife.”

“She is all mind,” said Monsieur Becker, dubiously.

Several days went by, during which the snow in the valleys melted gradually away; the green of the forests and of the grass began to show; Norwegian Nature made ready her wedding garments for her brief bridal of a day. During this period, when the softened air invited every one to leave the house, Seraphita remained at home in solitude. When at last she admitted Minna, the latter saw at once the ravages of inward fever; Seraphita’s voice was hollow, her skin pallid; hitherto a poet might have compared her lustre to that of diamonds,—now it was that of a topaz.

“Have you seen her?” asked Wilfrid, who had wandered around the Swedish dwelling waiting for Minna’s return.

“Yes,” answered the young girl, weeping; “We must lose him!”

“Mademoiselle,” cried Wilfrid, endeavoring to repress the loud tones of his angry voice, “do not jest with me. You can love Seraphita only as one young girl can love another, and not with the love which she inspires in me. You do not know your danger if my jealousy were really aroused. Why can I not go to her? Is it you who stand in my way?”

“I do not know by what right you probe my heart,” said Minna, calm in appearance, but inwardly terrified. “Yes, I love him,” she said recovering the courage of her convictions, that she might, for once, confess the religion of her heart. “But my jealousy, natural as it is in love, fears no one here below. Alas! I am jealous of a secret feeling which absorbs him. Between him and me there is a great gulf fixed which I cannot cross. Would that I knew who loves him best, the stars or I! which of us would sacrifice our being most eagerly for his happiness! Why should I not be free to avow my love? In the presence of death we may declare our feelings, — and Seraphitus is about to die.”

“Minna, you are mistaken; the siren I so love and long for, she, whom I have seen, feeble and languid, on her couch of furs, is not a young man.”

“Monsieur,” answered Minna, distressfully, “the being whose powerful hand guided me on the Falberg,

who led me to the sæter sheltered beneath the Ice-Cap, there —" she said, pointing to the peak, "is not a feeble girl. Ah, had you but heard him prophesying! His poem was the music of thought. A young girl never uttered those solemn tones of a voice which stirred my soul."

"What certainty have you?" said Wilfrid.

"None but that of the heart," answered Minna.

"And I," cried Wilfrid, casting on his companion the terrible glance of the earthly desire that kills, "I, too, know how powerful is her empire over me, and I will undeceive you."

At this moment, while the words were rushing from Wilfrid's lips as rapidly as the thoughts surged in his brain, they saw Seraphita coming towards them from the house, followed by David. The apparition calmed the man's excitement.

"Look," he said, "could any but a woman move with that grace and languor?"

"He suffers; he comes forth for the last time," said Minna.

David went back at a sign from his mistress, who advanced towards Wilfrid and Minna.

"Let us go to the falls of the Sieg," she said, expressing one of those desires which suddenly possess the sick and which the well hasten to obey.

A thin white mist covered the valleys around the fiord and the sides of the mountains, whose icy summits, sparkling like stars, pierced the vapor and gave it the appearance of a moving milky way. The sun

was visible through the haze like a globe of red fire. Though winter still lingered, puffs of warm air laden with the scent of the birch-trees, already adorned with their rosy efflorescence, and of the larches, whose silken tassels were beginning to appear, — breezes tempered by the incense and the sighs of earth, — gave token of the glorious Northern spring, the rapid, fleeting joy of that most melancholy of Natures. The wind was beginning to lift the veil of mist which half-obscured the gulf. The birds sang. The bark of the trees where the sun had not yet dried the clinging hoar-frost shone gayly to the eye in its fantastic wreathings which trickled away in murmuring rivulets as the warmth reached them. The three friends walked in silence along the shore. Wilfrid and Minna alone noticed the magic transformation that was taking place in the monotonous picture of the winter landscape. Their companion walked in thought, as though a voice were sounding to her ears in this concert of Nature.

Presently they reached the ledge of rocks through which the Sieg had forced its way, after escaping from the long avenue cut by its waters in an undulating line through the forest, — a fluvial pathway flanked by aged firs and roofed with strong-ribbed arches like those of a cathedral. Looking back from that vantage-ground, the whole extent of the fiord could be seen at a glance, with the open sea sparkling on the horizon beyond it like a burnished blade.

At this moment the mist, rolling away, left the sky blue and clear. Among the valleys and around the

trees fitted the shining fragments, — a diamond dust swept by the freshening breeze. The torrent rolled on toward them ; along its length a vapor rose, tinted by the sun with every color of his light ; the decomposing rays flashing prismatic fires along the many-tinted scarf of waters. The rugged ledge on which they stood was carpeted by several kinds of lichen, forming a noble mat variegated by moisture and lustrous like the sheen of a silken fabric. Shrubs, already in bloom, crowned the rocks with garlands. Their waving foliage, eager for the freshness of the water, drooped its tresses above the stream ; the larches shook their light fringes and played with the pines, stiff and motionless as aged men. This luxuriant beauty was foiled by the solemn colonnades of the forest-trees, rising in terraces upon the mountains, and by the calm sheet of the fiord, lying below, where the torrent buried its fury and was still. Beyond, the sea hemmed in this page of Nature, written by the greatest of poets, Chance ; to whom the wild luxuriance of creation when apparently abandoned to itself is owing.

The village of Jarvis was a lost point in the landscape, in this immensity of Nature, sublime at this moment like all things else of ephemeral life which present a fleeting image of perfection ; for, by a law fatal to no eyes but our own, creations which appear complete — the love of our heart and the desire of our eyes — have but one spring-tide here below. Standing on this breast-work of rock these three persons might well suppose themselves alone in the universe.

“What beauty!” cried Wilfrid.

“Nature sings hymns,” said Seraphita. “Is not her music exquisite? Tell me, Wilfrid, could any of the women you once knew create such a glorious retreat for herself as this? I am conscious here of a feeling seldom inspired by the sight of cities, a longing to lie down amid this quickening verdure. Here, with eyes to heaven and an open heart, lost in the bosom of immensity, I could hear the sighing of the flower, scarce budded, which longs for wings, or the cry of the eider grieving that it can only fly, and remember the desires of man who, issuing from all, is none the less ever longing. But that, Wilfrid, is only a woman’s thought. You find seductive fancies in the wreathing mists, the light embroidered veils which Nature dons like a coy maiden, in this atmosphere where she perfumes for her spousals the greenery of her tresses. You seek the naiad’s form amid the gauzy vapors, and to your thinking my ears should listen only to the virile voice of the Torrent.”

“But Love is there, like the bee in the calyx of the flower,” replied Wilfrid, perceiving for the first time a trace of earthly sentiment in her words, and fancying the moment favorable for an expression of his passionate tenderness.

“Always there?” said Seraphita, smiling. Minna had left them for a moment to gather the blue saxifrages growing on a rock above.

“Always,” repeated Wilfrid. “Hear me,” he said, with a masterful glance which was foiled as by a dia-

mond breast-plate. "You know not what I am, nor what I can be, nor what I will. Do not reject my last entreaty. Be mine for the good of that world whose happiness you bear upon your heart. Be mine that my conscience may be pure; that a voice divine may sound in my ears and infuse Good into the great enterprise I have undertaken prompted by my hatred to the nations, but which I swear to accomplish for their benefit if you will walk beside me. What higher mission can you ask for love? what nobler part can woman aspire to? I came to Norway to meditate a great design."

"And you will sacrifice its grandeur," she said, "to an innocent girl who loves you, and who will lead you in the paths of peace."

"What matters sacrifice," he cried, "if I have you? Hear my secret. I have gone from end to end of the North, — that great smithy from whose anvils new races have spread over the earth, like human tides appointed to refresh the wornout civilizations. I wished to begin my work at some Northern point, to win the empire which force and intellect must ever give over a primitive people; to form that people for battle, to drive them to wars which should ravage Europe like a conflagration, crying liberty to some, pillage to others, glory here, pleasure there! — I, myself, remaining an image of Destiny, cruel, implacable, advancing like the whirlwind, which sucks from the atmosphere the particles that make the thunderbolt, and falls like a devouring scourge upon the nations. Europe is at an epoch when she awaits the new Messiah who shall de-

stroy society and remake it. She can no longer believe except in him who crushes her under foot. The day is at hand when poets and historians will justify me, exalt me, and borrow my ideas, mine! And all the while my triumph will be a jest, written in blood, the jest of my vengeance! But not here, Seraphita; what I see of the North disgusts me. Hers is a mere blind force; I thirst for the Indies! I would rather fight a selfish, cowardly, mercantile government. Besides, it is easier to stir the imagination of the peoples at the feet of the Caucasus than to argue with the intellect of the icy lands which here surround me. Therefore am I tempted to cross the Russian steppes and pour my triumphant human tide through Asia to the Ganges, and overthrow the British rule. Seven men have done this thing before me in other epochs of the world. I will emulate them. I will spread Art like the Saracens, hurled by Mohammed upon Europe. Mine shall be no paltry sovereignty like those that govern to-day the ancient provinces of the Roman empire, disputing with their subjects about a customs right! No, nothing can bar my way! Like Genghis Khan, my feet shall tread a third of the globe, my hand shall grasp the throat of Asia like Aurung-Zeb. Be my companion! Let me seat thee, beautiful and noble being, on a throne! I do not doubt success, but live within my heart and I am sure of it."

"I have already reigned," said Seraphita, coldly.

The words fell as the axe of a skilful woodman falls at the root of a young tree and brings it down at a

single blow. Men alone can comprehend the rage that a woman excites in the soul of a man when, after showing her his strength, his power, his wisdom, his superiority, the capricious creature bends her head and says, "All that is nothing;" when, unmoved, she smiles and says, "Such things are known to me," as though his power were nought.

"What!" cried Wilfrid, in despair, "can the riches of art, the riches of worlds, the splendors of a court—"

She stopped him by a single inflexion of her lips, and said, "Beings more powerful than you have offered me far more."

"Thou hast no soul," he cried, — "no soul, if thou art not persuaded by the thought of comforting a great man, who is willing now to sacrifice all things to live beside thee in a little house on the shores of a lake,"

"But," she said, "I am loved with a boundless love."

"By whom?" cried Wilfrid, approaching Seraphita with a frenzied movement, as if to fling her into the foaming basin of the Sieg.

She looked at him and slowly extended her arm, pointing to Minna, who now sprang towards her, fair and glowing and lovely as the flowers she held in her hand.

"Child!" said Seraphitus, advancing to meet her.

Wilfrid remained where she left him, motionless as the rock on which he stood, lost in thought, longing to let himself go into the torrent of the Sieg, like the fallen trees which hurried past his eyes and disappeared in the bosom of the gulf.

"I gathered them for you," said Minna, offering the

bunch of saxifrages to the being she adored. "One of them, see, this one," she added, selecting a flower, "is like that you found on the Falberg."

Seraphitus looked alternately at the flower and at Minna.

"Why question me? Dost thou doubt me?"

"No," said the young girl, "my trust in you is infinite. You are more beautiful to look upon than this glorious nature, but your mind surpasses in intellect that of all humanity. When I have been with you I seem to have prayed to God. I long —"

"For what?" said Seraphitus, with a glance that revealed to the young girl the vast distance which separated them.

"To suffer in your stead."

"Ah, dangerous being!" cried Seraphitus in his heart. "Is it wrong, oh my God! to desire to offer her to Thee? Dost thou remember, Minna, what I said to thee up there?" he added, pointing to the summit of the Ice-Cap.

"He is terrible again," thought Minna, trembling with fear.

The voice of the Sieg accompanied the thoughts of the three beings united on this platform of projecting rock, but separated in soul by the abysses of the Spiritual World.

"Seraphitus! teach me," said Minna in a silvery voice, soft as the motion of a sensitive plant, "teach me how to cease to love you. Who could fail to admire you; love is an admiration that never wearies."

“Poor child!” said Seraphitus, turning pale; “there is but one whom thou canst love in that way.”

“Who?” asked Minna.

“Thou shalt know hereafter,” he said, in the feeble voice of a man who lies down to die.

“Help, help! he is dying!” cried Minna.

Wilfrid ran towards them. Seeing Seraphita as she lay on a fragment of gneiss, where time had cast its velvet mantle of lustrous lichen and tawny mosses now burnished in the sunlight, he whispered softly, “How beautiful she is!”

“One other look! the last that I shall ever cast upon this nature in travail,” said Seraphita, rallying her strength and rising to her feet.

She advanced to the edge of the rocky platform, whence her eyes took in the scenery of that grand and glorious landscape, so verdant, flowery, and animated, yet so lately buried in its winding-sheet of snow.

“Farewell,” she said, “farewell, home of Earth, warmed by the fires of Love; where all things press with ardent force from the centre to the extremities; where the extremities are gathered up, like a woman’s hair, to weave the mysterious braid which binds us in that invisible ether to the Thought Divine!”

“Behold the man bending above that furrow moistened with his tears, who lifts his head for an instant to question Heaven; behold the woman gathering her children that she may feed them with her milk; see him who lashes the ropes in the height of the gale; see her who sits in the hollow of the rocks, awaiting the

father! Behold all they who stretch their hands in want after a lifetime spent in thankless toil. To all peace and courage, and to all farewell!

“Hear you the cry of the soldier, dying nameless and unknown? the wail of the man deceived who weeps in the desert? To them peace and courage; to all farewell!

“Farewell, you who die for the kings of the earth! Farewell, ye people without a country and ye countries without a people, each with a mutual want. Above all, farewell to Thee who knew not where to lay Thy head, Exile divine! Farewell, mothers beside your dying sons! Farewell, ye Little Ones, ye Feeble, ye Suffering, you whose sorrows I have so often borne! Farewell, all ye who have descended into the sphere of Instinct that you may suffer there for others!

“Farewell, ye mariners who seek the Orient through the thick darkness of your abstractions, vast as principles! Farewell, martyrs of thought, led by thought into the presence of the True Light. Farewell, regions of study where mine ears can hear the plaint of genius neglected and insulted, the sigh of the patient scholar to whom enlightenment comes too late!

“I see the angelic choir, the wafting of perfumes, the incense of the heart of those who go their way consoling, praying, imparting celestial balm and living light to suffering souls! Courage, ye choir of Love! you to whom the peoples cry, ‘Comfort us, comfort us, defend us!’ To you courage! and farewell!

“Farewell, ye granite rocks that shall bloom a flower;

farewell, flower that becomes a dove ; farewell, dove that shalt be woman ; farewell, woman, who art Suffering, man, who art Belief ! Farewell, you who shall be all love, all prayer ! ”

Broken with fatigue, this inexplicable being leaned for the first time on Wilfrid and on Minna to be taken home. Wilfrid and Minna felt the shock of a mysterious contact in and through the being who thus connected them. They had scarcely advanced a few steps when David met them, weeping. “ She will die,” he said, “ why have you brought her hither ? ”

The old man raised her in his arms with the vigor of youth and bore her to the gate of the Swedish castle like an eagle bearing a white lamb to his mountain eyrie.

*“ The old man raised her in his arms with the vigor
of youth and bore her to the gate of the Swedish
Castle.”*



Jules Girardet

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Procède Cousin

VI.

THE PATH TO HEAVEN.

THE day succeeding that on which Seraphita foresaw her death and bade farewell to Earth, as a prisoner looks round his dungeon before leaving it forever, she suffered pains which obliged her to remain in the helpless immobility of those whose pangs are great. Wilfrid and Minna went to see her, and found her lying on her couch of furs. Still veiled in flesh, her soul shone through that veil, which grew more and more transparent day by day. The progress of the Spirit, piercing the last obstacle between itself and the Infinite, was called an illness, the hour of Life went by the name of death. David wept as he watched her sufferings; unreasonable as a child, he would not listen to his mistress's consolations. Monsieur Becker wished Seraphita to try remedies; but all were useless.

One morning she sent for the two beings whom she loved, telling them that this would be the last of her bad days. Wilfrid and Minna came in terror, knowing well that they were about to lose her. Seraphita smiled to them as one departing to a better world; her head drooped like a flower heavy with dew, which opens its calyx for the last time to waft its fragrance on the breeze. She looked at these friends with a sadness

that was for them, not for herself; she thought no longer of herself, and they felt this with a grief mingled with gratitude which they were unable to express. Wilfrid stood silent and motionless, lost in thoughts excited by events whose vast bearings enabled him to conceive of some illimitable immensity.

Emboldened by the weakness of the being lately so powerful, or perhaps by the fear of losing him forever, Minna bent down over the couch and said, "Seraphitus, let me follow thee!"

"Can I forbid thee?"

"Why will thou not love me enough to stay with me?"

"I can love nothing here."

"What canst thou love?"

"Heaven."

"Is it worthy of heaven to despise the creatures of God?"

"Minna, can we love two beings at once? Would our beloved be indeed our beloved if he did not fill our hearts? Must he not be the first, the last, the only one? She who is all love, must she not leave the world for her beloved? Human ties are but a memory, she has no ties except to him! Her soul is hers no longer; it is his. If she keeps within her soul anything that is not his, does she love? No, she loves not. To love feebly, is that to love at all? The voice of her beloved makes her joyful; it flows through her veins in a crimson tide more glowing far than blood; his glance is the light that penetrates her; her being

melts into his being. He is warm to her soul. He is the light that lightens; near to him there is neither cold nor darkness. He is never absent, he is always with us; we think in him, to him, by him! Minna, that is how I love him."

"Love whom?" said Minna, tortured with sudden jealousy.

"God," replied Seraphitus, his voice glowing in their souls like fires of liberty lighted from peak to peak upon the mountains, — "God, who does not betray us! God, who will never abandon us! who crowns our wishes; who satisfies His creatures with joy — joy unalloyed and infinite! God, who never wearies but ever smiles! God, who pours into the soul fresh treasures day by day; who purifies and leaves no bitterness; who is all harmony, all flame! God, who has placed Himself within our hearts to blossom there; who hearkens to our prayers; who does not stand aloof when we are His, but gives His presence absolutely! He who revives us, magnifies us, and multiplies us in Himself; God! Minna, I love thee because thou mayst be His! I love thee because if thou come to Him thou wilt be mine."

"Lead me to Him," cried Minna, kneeling down; "take me by the hand; I will not leave thee!"

"Lead us, Seraphita!" cried Wilfrid, coming to Minna's side with an impetuous movement. "Yes, thou hast given me a thirst for Light, a thirst for the Word. I am parched with the Love thou hast put into my heart; I desire to keep thy soul in mine; thy will is mine; I will do whatsoever thou biddest me. Since I

cannot obtain thee, I will keep thy will and all the thoughts that thou hast given me. If I may not unite myself with thee except by the power of my spirit, I will cling to thee in soul as the flame to what it laps. Speak !”

“Angel !” exclaimed the mysterious being, enfolding them both in one glance, as it were with an azure mantle, “Heaven shall be thine heritage !”

Silence fell among them after these words, which sounded in the souls of the man and of the woman like the first notes of some celestial harmony.

“If you would teach your feet to tread the Path to heaven, know that the way is hard at first,” said the weary sufferer ; “God wills that you shall seek Him for Himself. In that sense, He is jealous ; He demands your whole self. But when you have given Him yourself, never, never will He abandon you. I leave with you the keys of the kingdom of His Light, where evermore you shall dwell in the bosom of the Father, in the heart of the Bridegroom. No sentinels guard the approaches ; you may enter where you will ; His palaces, His treasures, His sceptre, all are free. ‘Take them !’ He says. But—you must *will* to go there. Like one preparing for a journey, a man must leave his home, renounce his projects, bid farewell to friends, to father, mother, sister, even to the helpless brother who cries after him, —yes, farewell to them eternally ; you will no more return than did the martyrs on their way to the stake. You must strip yourself of every sentiment, of everything to which man clings. Unless you do this you are but half-hearted in your enterprise.

“ Do for God what you do for your ambitious projects, what you do in consecrating yourself to Art, what you have done when you loved a human creature or sought some secret of human science. Is not God the whole of science, the all of love, the source of poetry? Surely His riches are worthy of being coveted! His treasure is inexhaustible, His poem infinite, His love immutable, His science sure and darkened by no mysteries. Be anxious for nothing, He will give you all. Yes, in His heart are treasures with which the petty joys you lose on earth are not to be compared. What I tell you is true; you shall possess His power; you may use it as you would use the gifts of lover or mistress. Alas! men doubt, they lack faith, and will, and persistence. If some set their feet in the path, they look behind them and presently turn back. Few decide between the two extremes, — to go or stay, heaven or the mire. All hesitate. Weakness leads astray, passion allures into dangerous paths, vice becomes habitual, man flounders in the mud and makes no progress towards a better state.

“ All human beings go through a previous life in the sphere of Instinct, where they are brought to see the worthlessness of earthly treasures, to amass which they gave themselves such untold pains! Who can tell how many times the human being lives in the sphere of Instinct before he is prepared to enter the sphere of Abstractions, where thought expends itself on erring science, where mind wearies at last of human language? for, when Matter is exhausted, Spirit enters.

Who knows how many fleshly forms the heir of heaven occupies before he can be brought to understand the value of that silence and solitude whose starry plains are but the vestibule of Spiritual Worlds? He feels his way amid the void, makes trial of nothingness, and then at last his eyes revert upon the Path. Then follow other existences, — all to be lived to reach the place where Light effulgent shines. Death is the post-house of the journey. A lifetime may be needed merely to gain the virtues which annul the errors of man's preceding life. First comes the life of suffering, whose tortures create a thirst for love. Next the life of love and devotion to the creature, teaching devotion to the Creator, — a life where the virtues of love, its martyrdoms, its joys followed by sorrows, its angelic hopes, its patience, its resignation, excite an appetite for things divine. Then follows the life which seeks in silence the traces of the Word; in which the soul grows humble and charitable. Next the life of longing; and lastly, the life of prayer. In that is the noon-day sun; there are the flowers, there the harvest!

“The virtues we acquire, which develop slowly within us, are the invisible links that bind each one of our existences to the others, — existences which the spirit alone remembers, for Matter has no memory for spiritual things. Thought alone holds the tradition of the bygone life. The endless legacy of the past to the present is the secret source of human genius. Some receive the gift of form, some the gift of numbers, others the gift of harmony. All these gifts are steps of

progress in the Path of Light. Yes, he who possesses a single one of them touches at that point the Infinite. Earth has divided the Word — of which I here reveal some syllables — into particles, she has reduced it to dust and has scattered it through her works, her dogmas, her poems. If some impalpable grain shines like a diamond in a human work, men cry: ‘How grand! how true! how glorious!’ That fragment vibrates in their souls and wakes a presentiment of heaven: to some, a melody that weans from earth; to others, the solitude that draws to God. To all, whatsoever sends us back upon ourselves, whatsoever strikes us down and crushes us, lifts or abases us, — *that* is but a syllable of the Divine Word.

“ When a human soul draws its first furrow straight, the rest will follow surely. One thought borne inward, one prayer uplifted, one suffering endured, one echo of the Word within us, and our souls are forever changed. All ends in God; and many are the ways to find Him by walking straight before us. When the happy day arrives in which you set your feet upon the Path and begin your pilgrimage, the world will know nothing of it; earth no longer understands you; you no longer understand each other. Men who attain to a knowledge of these things, who lisp a few syllables of the Word, often have not where to lay their head; hunted like beasts they perish on the scaffold, to the joy of assembled peoples, while Angels open to them the gates of heaven. Therefore, your destiny is a secret between yourself and God, just as love is a secret between two

hearts. You may be the buried treasure, trodden under the feet of men thirsting for gold yet all-unknowing that you are there beneath them.

“Henceforth your existence becomes a thing of ceaseless activity; each act has a meaning which connects you with God, just as in love your actions and your thoughts are filled with the loved one. But love and its joys, love and its pleasures limited by the senses, are but the imperfect image of the love which unites you to your celestial Spouse. All earthly joy is mixed with anguish, with discontent. If love ought not to pall then death should end it while its flame is high, so that we see no ashes. But in God our wretchedness becomes delight, joy lives upon itself and multiplies, and grows, and has no limit. In the Earthly life our fleeting love is ended by tribulation; in the Spiritual life the tribulations of a day end in joys unending. The soul is ceaselessly joyful. We feel God with us, in us; He gives a sacred savour to all things; He shines in the soul; He imparts to us His sweetness; He stills our interest in the world viewed for ourselves; He quickens our interest in it viewed for His sake, and grants us the exercise of His power upon it. In His name we do the works which He inspires, we act for Him, we have no self except in Him, we love His creatures with undying love, we dry their tears and long to bring them unto Him, as a loving woman longs to see the inhabitants of earth obey her well-beloved.

“The final life, the fruition of all other lives, to which the powers of the soul have tended, and whose

merits open the Sacred Portals to perfected man, is the life of Prayer. Who can make you comprehend the grandeur, the majesty, the might of Prayer? May my voice, these words of mine, ring in your hearts and change them. Be now, here, what you may be after cruel trial! There are privileged beings, Prophets, Seers, Messengers, and Martyrs, all those who suffer for the Word and who proclaim it; such souls spring at a bound across the human sphere and rise at once to Prayer. So, too, with those whose souls receive the fire of Faith. Be one of those brave souls! God welcomes boldness. He loves to be taken by violence; He will never reject those who force their way to Him. Know this! desire, the torrent of your will, is so all-powerful that a single emission of it, made with force, can obtain all; a single cry, uttered under the pressure of Faith, suffices. Be one of such beings, full of force, of will, of love! Be conquerors on the earth! Let the hunger and thirst of God possess you. Fly to Him as the hart panting for the water-brooks. Desire shall lend you its wings; tears, those blossoms of repentance, shall be the celestial baptism from which your nature will issue purified. Cast yourself on the breast of the stream in Prayer! Silence and meditation are the means of following the Way. God reveals Himself, unflinchingly, to the solitary, thoughtful seeker.

“It is thus that the separation takes place between Matter, which so long has wrapped its darkness round you, and Spirit, which was in you from the beginning,

the light which lighted you and now brings noon-day to your soul. Yes, your broken heart shall receive the light; the light shall bathe it. Then you will no longer feel convictions, they will have changed to certainties. The Poet utters; the Thinker meditates; the Righteous acts; but he who stands upon the borders of the Divine World prays; and his prayer is word, thought, action, in one! Yes, prayer includes all, contains all; it completes nature, for it reveals to you the mind within it and its progression. White and shining virgin of all human virtues, ark of the covenant between earth and heaven, tender and strong companion partaking of the lion and of the lamb, Prayer! Prayer will give you the key of heaven! Bold and pure as innocence, strong, like all that is single and simple, this glorious, invincible Queen rests, nevertheless, on the material world; she takes possession of it; like the sun, she clasps it in a circle of light. The universe belongs to him, who wills, who knows, who prays; but he must will, he must know, he must pray; in a word, he must possess force, wisdom, and faith.

“Therefore Prayer, issuing from so many trials, is the consummation of all truths, all powers, all feelings. Fruit of the laborious, progressive, continued development of natural properties and faculties vitalized anew by the divine breath of the Word, Prayer has occult activity; it is the final worship — not the material worship of images, nor the spiritual worship of formulas, but the worship of the Divine World. We say no prayers, — prayer forms within us; it is a

faculty which acts of itself; it has attained a way of action which lifts it outside of forms; it links the soul to God, with whom we unite as the root of the tree unites with the soil; our veins draw life from the principle of life, and we live by the life of the universe. Prayer bestows external conviction by making us penetrate the Material World through the cohesion of all our faculties with the elementary substances; it bestows internal conviction by developing our essence and mingling it with that of the Spiritual Worlds. To be able to pray thus, you must attain to an utter abandonment of flesh; you must acquire through the fires of the furnace the purity of the diamond; for this complete communion with the Divine is obtained only in absolute repose, where storms and conflicts are at rest.

“Yes, Prayer — the aspiration of the soul freed absolutely from the body — bears all forces within it, and applies them to the constant and perseverant union of the Visible and the Invisible. When you possess the faculty of praying without weariness, with love, with force, with certainty, with intelligence, your spiritualized nature will presently be invested with power. Like a rushing wind, like a thunderbolt, it cuts its way through all things and shares the power of God. The quickness of the Spirit becomes yours; in an instant you may pass from region to region; like the Word itself, you are transported from the ends of the world to other worlds. Harmony exists, and you are part of it! Light is there and your eyes possess it! Melody is heard and you echo it! Under such con-

ditions, you feel your perceptions developing, widening ; the eyes of your mind reach to vast distances. There is, in truth, neither time nor place to the Spirit ; space and duration are proportions created for Matter ; spirit and matter have naught in common

“ Though these things take place in stillness, in silence, without agitation, without external movement, yet Prayer is all action ; but it is spiritual action, stripped of substantiality, and reduced, like the motion of the worlds, to an invisible pure force. It penetrates everywhere like light ; it gives vitality to souls that come beneath its rays, as Nature beneath the sun. It resuscitates virtue, purifies and sanctifies all actions, peoples solitude, and gives a foretaste of eternal joys. When you have once felt the delights of the divine intoxication which comes of this internal travail, then all is yours ! once take the lute on which we sing to God within your hands, and you will never part with it. Hence the solitude in which Angelic Spirits live ; hence their disdain of human joys. They are withdrawn from those who must die to live ; they hear the language of such beings, but they no longer understand their ideas ; they wonder at their movements, at what the world terms policies, material laws, societies. For them all mysteries are over ; truth, and truth alone, is theirs. They who have reached the point where their eyes discern the Sacred Portals, who, not looking back, not uttering one regret, contemplate worlds and comprehend their destinies, such as they keep silence, wait, and bear their final struggles. The worst of all

those struggles is the last; at the zenith of all virtue is Resignation,—to be an exile and not lament, no longer to delight in earthly things and yet to smile, to belong to God and yet to stay with men! You hear the voice that cries to you, ‘Advance!’ Often celestial visions of descending Angels compass you about with songs of praise; then, tearless, uncomplaining, must you watch them as they reascend the skies! To murmur is to forfeit all. Resignation is a fruit that ripens at the gates of heaven. How powerful, how glorious the calm smile, the pure brow of the resigned human creature. Radiant is the light of that brow. They who live in its atmosphere grow purer. That calm glance penetrates and softens. More eloquent by silence than the prophet by speech, such beings triumph by their simple presence. Their ears are quick to hear as a faithful dog listening for his master. Brighter than hope, stronger than love, higher than faith, that creature of resignation is the virgin standing on the earth, who holds for a moment the conquered palm, then, rising heavenward, leaves behind her the imprint of her white, pure feet. When she has passed away men flock around and cry, ‘See! See!’ Sometimes God holds her still in sight,—a figure to whose feet creep Forms and Species of Animality to be shown their way. She wafts the light exhaling from her hair, and they see; she speaks, and they hear. ‘A miracle!’ they cry. Often she triumphs in the name of God; frightened men deny her and put her to death; smiling, she lays down her sword and goes to the stake, having saved the

Peoples. How many a pardoned Angel has passed from martyrdom to heaven! Sinai, Golgotha are not in this place nor in that; Angels are crucified in every place, in every sphere. Sighs pierce to God from the whole universe. This earth on which we live is but a single sheaf of the great harvest; humanity is but a species in the vast garden where the flowers of heaven are cultivated. Everywhere God is like unto Himself, and everywhere, by prayer, it is easy to reach Him."

With these words, which fell from the lips of another Hagar in the wilderness, burning the souls of the hearers as the live coal of the word inflamed Isaiah, this mysterious being paused as though to gather some remaining strength. Wilfrid and Minna dared not speak. Suddenly HE lifted himself up to die:—

"Soul of all things, oh my God, thou whom I love for Thyself! Thou, Judge and Father, receive a love which has no limit. Give me of thine essence and thy faculties that I be wholly thine! Take me, that I no longer be myself! Am I not purified? then cast me back into the furnace! If I be not yet proved in the fire, make me some nurturing ploughshare, or the Sword of victory! Grant me a glorious martyrdom in which to proclaim thy Word! Rejected, I will bless thy justice. But if excess of love may win in a moment that which hard and patient labor cannot attain, then bear me upward in thy chariot of fire! Grant me triumph, or further trial, still will I bless thee! To suffer for thee, is not that to triumph? Take me, seize me, bear me away! nay, if thou wilt, reject me! Thou

art He who can do no evil. Ah!" he cried, after a pause, "the bonds are breaking."

"Spirits of the pure, ye sacred flock, come forth from the hidden places, come on the surface of the luminous waves! The hour now is; come, assemble! Let us sing at the gates of the Sanctuary; our songs shall drive away the final clouds. With one accord let us hail the Dawn of the Eternal Day. Behold the rising of the one True Light! Ah, why may I not take with me these my friends! Farewell, poor earth, Farewell!"

VII.

THE ASSUMPTION.

THE last psalm was uttered neither by word, look, nor gesture, nor by any of those signs which men employ to communicate their thoughts, but as the soul speaks to itself; for at the moment when Seraphita revealed herself in her true nature, her thoughts were no longer enslaved by human words. The violence of that last prayer had burst her bonds. Her soul, like a white dove, remained for an instant poised above the body whose exhausted substances were about to be annihilated.

The aspiration of the Soul toward heaven was so contagious that Wilfrid and Minna, beholding those radiant scintillations of Life, perceived not Death.

They had fallen on their knees when *he* had turned toward his Orient, and they shared his ecstasy.

The fear of the Lord, which creates man a second time, purging away his dross, mastered their hearts.

Their eyes, veiled to the things of Earth, were opened to the Brightness of Heaven.

Though, like the Seers of old called Prophets by men, they were filled with the terror of the Most High, yet like them they continued firm when they found themselves within the radiance where the Glory of the SPIRIT shone.

The veil of flesh, which, until now, had hidden that glory from their eyes, dissolved imperceptibly away, and left them free to behold the Divine substance.

They stood in the twilight of the Coming Dawn, whose feeble rays prepared them to look upon the True Light, to hear the Living Word, and yet not die.

In this state they began to perceive the immeasurable differences which separate the things of earth from the things of Heaven.

LIFE, on the borders of which they stood, leaning upon each other, trembling and illuminated, like two children standing under shelter in presence of a conflagration, That Life offered no lodgment to the senses.

The ideas they used to interpret their vision to themselves were to the things seen what the visible senses of a man are to his soul, the material covering of a divine essence.

The departing SPIRIT was above them, shedding incense without odor, melody without sound. About them, where they stood, were neither surfaces, nor angles, nor atmosphere.

They dared neither question him nor contemplate him; they stood in the shadow of that Presence as beneath the burning rays of a tropical sun, fearing to raise their eyes lest the light should blast them.

They knew they were beside him, without being able to perceive how it was that they stood, as in a dream, on the confines of the Visible and the Invisible, nor how they had lost sight of the Visible and how they beheld the Invisible.

To each other they said: "If he touch us, we can die!" But the SPIRIT was now within the Infinite, and they knew not that neither time, nor space, nor death, existed there, and that a great gulf lay between them, although they thought themselves beside him.

Their souls were not prepared to receive in its fullness a knowledge of the faculties of that Life; they could have only faint and confused perceptions of it, suited to their weakness.

Were it not so, the thunder of the LIVING WORD, whose far-off tones now reached their ears, and whose meaning entered their souls as life unites with body,—one echo of that Word would have consumed their being as a whirlwind of fire laps up a fragile straw.

Therefore they saw only that which their nature, sustained by the strength of the SPIRIT, permitted them to see; they heard that only which they were able to hear.

And yet, though thus protected, they shuddered when the Voice of the anguished soul broke forth above them— the prayer of the SPIRIT awaiting Life and imploring it with a cry.

That cry froze them to the very marrow of their bones.

The SPIRIT knocked at the SACRED PORTAL. "What wilt thou?" answered a CHOIR, whose question echoed among the worlds. "To go to God." "Hast thou conquered?" "I have conquered the flesh through abstinence, I have conquered false knowledge by humility, I have conquered pride by charity, I have conquered

the earth by love; I have paid my dues by suffering, I am purified in the fires of faith, I have longed for Life by prayer: I wait in adoration, and I am resigned."

No answer came.

"God's will be done!" answered the SPIRIT, believing that he was about to be rejected.

His tears flowed and fell like dew upon the heads of the two kneeling witnesses, who trembled before the justice of God.

Suddenly the trumpets sounded,—the trumpets of Victory won by the ANGEL in this last trial. The reverberation passed through space as sound through its echo, filling it, and shaking the universe which Wilfrid and Minna felt like an atom beneath their feet. They trembled under an anguish caused by the dread of the mystery about to be accomplished.

A great movement took place, as though the Eternal Legions, putting themselves in motion, were passing upward in spiral columns. The worlds revolved like clouds driven by a furious wind. It was all rapid.

Suddenly the veils were rent away. They saw on high as it were a star, incomparably more lustrous than the most luminous of material stars, which detached itself, and fell like a thunderbolt, dazzling as lightning. Its passage paled the faces of the pair, who thought it to be THE LIGHT Itself.

It was the Messenger of good tidings, the plume of whose helmet was a flame of Life.

Behind him lay the swath of his way gleaming with a flood of the lights through which he passed.

He bore a palm and a sword. He touched the SPIRIT with the palm, and the SPIRIT was transfigured. Its white wings noiselessly unfolded.

This communication of THE LIGHT, changing the SPIRIT into a SERAPH and clothing it with a glorious form, a celestial armor, poured down such effulgent rays that the two Seers were paralyzed.

Like the three apostles to whom Jesus showed himself, they felt the dead weight of their bodies which denied them a complete and cloudless intuition of THE WORD and THE TRUE LIFE.

They comprehended the nakedness of their souls; they were able to measure the poverty of their light by comparing it — a humbling task — with the halo of the SERAPH.

A passionate desire to plunge back into the mire of earth and suffer trial took possession of them, — trial through which they might victoriously utter at the SACRED GATES the words of that radiant Seraph.

The Seraph knelt before the SANCTUARY, beholding it, at last, face to face; and he said, raising his hands thitherward, "Grant that these two may have further sight; they will love the Lord and proclaim His word."

At this prayer a veil fell. Whether it were that the hidden force which held the Seers had momentarily annihilated their physical bodies, or that it raised their spirits above those bodies, certain it is that they felt within them a rending of the pure from the impure.

The tears of the Seraph rose about them like a vapor, which hid the lower worlds from their knowledge, held

them in its folds, bore them upward, gave them forgetfulness of earthly meanings and the power of comprehending the meanings of things divine.

The True Light shone; it illumined the Creations, which seemed to them barren when they saw the source from which all worlds — Terrestrial, Spiritual, and Divine — derived their Motion.

Each world possessed a centre to which converged all points of its circumference. These worlds were themselves the points which moved toward the centre of their system. Each system had its centre in great celestial regions which communicated with the flaming and quenchless *Motor of all that is*.

Thus, from the greatest to the smallest of the worlds, and from the smallest of the worlds to the smallest portion of the beings who compose it, all was individual, and all was, nevertheless, One and indivisible.

What was the design of the Being, fixed in His essence and in His faculties, who transmitted that essence and those faculties without losing them? who manifested them outside of Himself without separating them from Himself? who rendered his creations outside of Himself fixed in their essence and mutable in their form? The pair thus called to the celestial festival could only see the order and arrangement of created beings and admire the immediate result. The Angels alone see more. They know the means; they comprehend the final end.

But what the two Elect were granted power to contemplate, what they were able to bring back as a testi-

mony which enlightened their minds forever after, was the proof of the action of the Worlds and of Beings; the consciousness of the effort with which they all converge to the Result.

They heard the divers parts of the Infinite forming one living melody; and each time that the accord made itself felt like a mighty respiration, the Worlds drawn by the concordant movement inclined themselves toward the Supreme Being who, from His impenetrable centre, issued all things and recalled all things to Himself.

This ceaseless alternation of voices and silence seemed the rhythm of the sacred hymn which resounds and prolongs its sound from age to age.

Wilfrid and Minna were enabled to understand some of the mysterious sayings of Him who had appeared on earth in the form which to each of them had rendered him comprehensible, — to one Seraphitus, to the other Seraphita, — for they saw that all was homogeneous in the sphere where he now was.

Light gave birth to melody, melody gave birth to light; colors were light and melody; motion was a Number endowed with Utterance; all things were at once sonorous, diaphanous, and mobile; so that each interpenetrated the other, the whole vast area was unobstructed and the Angels could survey it from the depths of the Infinite.

They perceived the puerility of human sciences, of which he had spoken to them.

The scene was to them a prospect without horizon, a boundless space into which an all-consuming desire

prompted them to plunge. But, fastened to their miserable bodies, they had the desire without the power to fulfil it.

The SERAPH, preparing for his flight, no longer looked towards them; he had nothing now in common with Earth.

Upward he rose; the shadow of his luminous presence covered the two Seers like a merciful veil, enabling them to raise their eyes and see him, rising in his glory to Heaven in company with the glad Archangel.

He rose as the sun from the bosom of the Eastern waves; but, more majestic than the orb and vowed to higher destinies, he could not be enchained like inferior creations in the spiral movement of the worlds; he followed the line of the Infinite, pointing without deviation to the One Centre, there to enter his eternal life, — to receive there, in his faculties and in his essence, the power to enjoy through Love, and the gift of comprehending through Wisdom.

The scene which suddenly unveiled itself to the eyes of the two Seers crushed them with a sense of its vastness; they felt like atoms, whose minuteness was not to be compared even to the smallest particle which the infinite of divisibility enabled the mind of man to imagine, brought into the presence of the infinite of Numbers, which God alone can comprehend as He alone can comprehend Himself.

Strength and Love! what heights, what depths in those two entities, whom the Seraph's first prayer placed like two links, as it were, to unite the im-

mensities of the lower worlds with the immensity of the higher universe !

They comprehended the invisible ties by which the material worlds are bound to the spiritual worlds. Remembering the sublime efforts of human genius, they were able to perceive the principle of all melody in the songs of heaven which gave sensations of color, of perfume, of thought, which recalled the innumerable details of all creations, as the songs of earth revive the infinite memories of love.

Brought by the exaltation of their faculties to a point that cannot be described in any language, they were able to cast their eyes for an instant into the Divine World. There all was Rejoicing.

Myriads of angels were flocking together, without confusion ; all alike yet all dissimilar, simple as the flower of the fields, majestic as the universe.

Wilfrid and Minna saw neither their coming nor their going ; they appeared suddenly in the Infinite and filled it with their presence, as the stars shine in the invisible ether.

The scintillations of their united diadems illumined space like the fires of the sky at dawn upon the mountains. Waves of light flowed from their hair, and their movements created tremulous undulations in space like the billows of a phosphorescent sea.

The two Seers beheld the SERAPH dimly in the midst of the immortal legions. Suddenly, as though all the arrows of a quiver had darted together, the Spirits swept away with a breath the last vestiges of the

human form ; as the SERAPH rose he became yet purer ; soon he seemed to them but a faint outline of what he had been at the moment of his transfiguration, — lines of fire without shadow.

Higher he rose, receiving from circle to circle some new gift, while the sign of his election was transmitted to each sphere into which, more and more purified, he entered.

No voice was silent ; the hymn diffused and multiplied itself in all its modulations : —

“Hail to him who enters living ! Come, flower of the Worlds ! diamond from the fires of suffering ! pearl without spot, desire without flesh, new link of earth and heaven, be Light ! Conquering spirit, Queen of the world, come for thy crown ! Victor of earth, receive thy diadem ! Thou art of us !”

The virtues of the SERAPH shone forth in all their beauty.

His earliest desire for heaven re-appeared, tender as childhood. The deeds of his life, like constellations, adorned him with their brightness. His acts of faith shone like the Jacinth of heaven, the color of sidereal fires. The pearls of Charity were upon him, — a chaplet of garnered tears ! Love divine surrounded him with roses ; and the whiteness of his Resignation obliterated all earthly trace.

Soon, to the eyes of the Seers, he was but a point of flame, growing brighter and brighter as its motion was lost in the melodious acclamations which welcomed his entrance into heaven.

The celestial accents made the two exiles weep.

Suddenly a silence as of death spread like a mourning veil from the first to the highest sphere, throwing Wilfrid and Minna into a state of intolerable expectation.

At this moment the SERAPH was lost to sight within the SANCTUARY, receiving there the gift of Life Eternal.

A movement of adoration made by the Host of heaven filled the two Seers with ecstasy mingled with terror. They felt that all were prostrate before the Throne, in all the spheres, in the Spheres Divine, in the Spiritual Spheres, and in the Worlds of Darkness.

The Angels bent the knee to celebrate the SERAPH'S glory; the Spirits bent the knee in token of their impatience; others bent the knee in the dark abysses, shuddering with awe.

A mighty cry of joy gushed forth, as the spring gushes forth to its millions of flowering herbs sparkling with diamond dew-drops in the sunlight; at that instant the SERAPH reappeared, effulgent, crying, " ETERNAL! ETERNAL! ETERNAL!"

The universe heard the cry and understood it; it penetrated the spheres as God penetrates them; it took possession of the infinite; the Seven Divine Worlds heard the Voice and answered.

A mighty movement was perceptible, as though whole planets, purified, were rising in dazzling light to become Eternal.

Had the SERAPH obtained, as a first mission, the work of calling to God the creations permeated by His Word?

But already the sublime HALLELUJAH was sounding in the ear of the desolate ones as the distant undulations of an ended melody. Already the celestial lights were fading like the gold and crimson tints of a setting sun. Death and Impurity recovered their prey.

As the two mortals re-entered the prison of flesh, from which their spirit had momentarily been delivered by some priceless sleep, they felt like those who wake after a night of brilliant dreams, the memory of which still lingers in their soul, though their body retains no consciousness of them, and human language is unable to give utterance to them.

The deep darkness of the sphere that was now about them was that of the sun of the visible worlds.

“Let us descend to those lower regions,” said Wilfrid.

“Let us do what he told us to do,” answered Minna.

“We have seen the worlds on their march to God; we know the Path. Our diadem of stars is There.”

Floating downward through the abysses, they re-entered the dust of the lesser worlds, and saw the Earth, like a subterranean cavern, suddenly illuminated to their eyes by the light which their souls brought with them, and which still environed them in a cloud of the paling harmonies of heaven. The sight was that which of old struck the inner eyes of Seers and Prophets. Ministers of all religions, Preachers of all pretended truths, Kings consecrated by Force and Terror, Warriors and Mighty men apportioning the Peoples among them, the Learned and the Rich standing above the suffering, noisy crowd, and noisily grinding them beneath

their feet, — all were there, accompanied by their wives and servants; all were robed in stuffs of gold and silver and azure studded with pearls and gems torn from the bowels of Earth, stolen from the depths of Ocean, for which Humanity had toiled throughout the centuries, sweating and blaspheming. But these treasures, these splendors, constructed of blood, seemed worn-out rags to the eyes of the two Exiles. “What do you there, in motionless ranks?” cried Wilfrid. They answered not. “What do you there, motionless?” They answered not. Wilfrid waved his hands over them, crying in a loud voice, “What do you there, in motionless ranks?” All, with unanimous action, opened their garments and gave to sight their withered bodies, eaten with worms, putrified, crumbling to dust, rotten with horrible diseases.

“You lead the nations to Death,” Wilfrid said to them. “You have depraved the earth, perverted the Word, prostituted justice. After devouring the grass of the fields you have killed the lambs of the fold. Do you think yourself justified because of your sores? I will warn my brethren who have ears to hear the Voice, and they will come and drink of the spring of Living Waters which you have hidden.”

“Let us save our strength for Prayer,” said Minna. “Wilfred, thy mission is not that of the Prophets or the Avenger or the Messenger; we are still on the confines of the lowest sphere; let us endeavor to rise through space on the wings of Prayer.”

“Thou shalt be all my love!”

“Thou shalt be all my strength!”

“We have seen the Mysteries; we are, each to the other, the only being here below to whom Joy and Sadness are comprehensible; let us pray, therefore: we know the Path, let us walk in it.”

“Give me thy hand,” said the Young Girl, “if we walk together, the way will be to me less hard and long.”

“With thee, with thee alone,” replied the Man, “can I cross the awful solitude without complaint.”

“Together we will go to Heaven,” she said.

The clouds gathered and formed a darksome dais. Suddenly the pair found themselves kneeling beside a body which old David was guarding from curious eyes, resolved to bury it himself.

Beyond those walls the first summer of the nineteenth century shone forth in all its glory. The two lovers believed they heard a Voice in the sun-rays. They breathed a celestial essence from the new-born flowers. Holding each other by the hand, they said, “That illimitable ocean which shines below us is but an image of what we saw above.”

“Where are you going?” asked Monsieur Becker.

“To God,” they answered. “Come with us, father.”

JESUS CHRIST IN FLANDERS.

PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES.

JESUS CHRIST IN FLANDERS.



TO MARCELINE DESBORDES-VALMORE.

To you, daughter of Flanders, and one of her modern glories, I offer this naïve tradition of your native land.

DE BALZAC.

AT a somewhat uncertain period in Brabantian history communication between the island of Walcheren and the coast of Flanders was carried on by means of a small vessel for the conveyance of passengers. Middelburg, the capital of the island, so celebrated in after days in the annals of Protestantism, had scarcely more than two or three hundred houses at the time of which we write. Ostend, now so wealthy, was then an unknown port, flanked by a straggling hamlet thinly populated by fishermen, petty traders, and unmolested buccaneers. Nevertheless the little town, though it contained only a score of houses and some three hundred huts, cottages, and hovels built of the remains of wrecked ships, boasted of a governor, a militia, a gibbet, a convent, a burgomaster, — in short, of all the evidences of an advanced civilization.

Who reigned in Brabant, Flanders, and Belgium at this period? As to that, tradition is silent. Let us

admit at once that the following history is full of the vague indefiniteness and mystery of the marvellous which the favorite orators of Flemish festivals delighted in imparting to their native legends, as diverse in poetry as they were contradictory in details. Told from age to age, repeated day and night from hearth to hearth by grandsires and narrators, this chronicle has received a different coloring from each century through which it has been handed down. Like buildings whose construction reflects the caprices of the architecture of their day, but whose blackened, time-worn masses are the delight of poets, such legends are the despair of commentators, — sifters of words and facts and dates. The narrator believes in them, as all the superstitious minds of Flanders have believed, without becoming either firmer or weaker in the faith. Finding it impossible to harmonize the various versions, we here give the tale, stripped, perhaps, of its romantic simplicity (difficult, indeed, to reproduce), but with its bold assertions which history disavows, its morality which religion sanctions, its mystical blossom of imagination and its esoteric meaning, which the wise may gather. To each his own nutriment and the duty of sifting the wheat from the chaff.

The vessel which carried passengers from the island of Walcheren to Ostend was about to start. Before casting off the iron chain which held the boat to a stone post of the little jetty from which the passengers embarked, the captain of the craft blew his horn at intervals to hasten late-comers, this being his last trip for

the day. Night was coming on; the rays of the setting sun scarcely enabled him to distinguish the distant coast of Flanders, or to see belated passengers, if any were hurrying along the embankments that surrounded the fields or making their way among the tall reeds of the marsh. The vessel was full, and a cry arose: "Why do you wait? let us start."

Just then a man appeared a few steps away from the jetty. The captain, who had neither seen him nor heard his step, was surprised. The passenger seemed to have suddenly risen from the ground, as though he were a peasant asleep in the fields, roused by the blowing of the horn. Was he a robber? perhaps a custom-house officer, or a constable? When he reached the jetty to which the boat was moored, the seven persons who were sitting in the after-part of the little vessel hastened to take their seats on the benches, so as to keep by themselves and not allow the stranger to join them. This was done from a quick, instinctive impulse, — one of those aristocratic thoughts which come into the minds of the rich. Four of these personages belonged to the higher nobility of Flanders. One was a young man, accompanied by two handsome hounds, wearing a cap adorned with jewels on his floating hair; he clanked his gilded spurs and twirled his moustachios insolently from time to time, casting contemptuous glances on the other passengers. A haughty young lady bore a falcon on her wrist and spoke only to her mother or to an ecclesiastic of high rank — a relation, no doubt — who accompanied them. These persons

made much noise and conversed together as if they alone were on the vessel. Beside them, however, was a man of great importance in the country, a stout burgher of Bruges, wrapped in a large cloak. His servant, armed to the teeth, was in charge of two bags filled with coin. There was also near them a man of science, — a professor of the University of Louvain, — attended by his secretary. These personages, who were all contemptuous of each other, were separated from the forward part of the boat by the thwarts of the rowers.

When the belated passenger stepped into the boat he threw a rapid glance at the stern, saw no place, and turned to seek one among the passengers who were sitting in the bows. The latter were poor people. On the appearance of this man with bare head, coat and breeches of brown camlet, an open collar and smock of heavy linen without ornament, holding neither hat nor cap in his hand and without purse or sword at his belt, every one took him to be a burgomaster sure of his authority, — a kindly, worthy man, like many of the old Flemish burgomasters whose ingenuous characters and nature have been so admirably preserved by the painters of their native land. The poor people in the bows received the stranger with demonstrations of respect which excited satirical whisperings among the group at the stern. An old soldier, a man of toil and hardships, gave up his place on a bench to the stranger and seated himself on the gunwale of the boat, maintaining his equilibrium by bracing his feet against the

wooden cross-pieces, like the spine bones of a fish, which served to bind the boat-planks together. A young woman, mother of a little child, belonging apparently to the working-women of Ostend, drew aside to make room for the new-comer. The movement showed neither servility nor contempt. It was one of those proofs of kind-heartedness by which poor people, who know the value of a service and the pleasures of brotherhood, reveal the nature and the sincerity of their souls, always so candid in exhibiting both their good qualities and their defects. The stranger thanked them both with a gesture full of noble feeling. Then he sat down between the young mother and the old soldier. Behind him was a peasant and his son about ten years of age. A beggar-woman, with a basket that was almost empty, old and wrinkled and ragged, — a type of misery and listless indifference, — lay huddled in the bows, crouching on a coil of rope. One of the rowers, an old sailor, having known her handsome and prosperous, had given her a passage (in the admirable language of the poorer classes) “for the love of God.”

“Thank you, Thomas,” said the old creature; “I’ll say a *Pater* and two *Aves* for you to-night in my prayers.”

The captain blew his horn again, looked round the silent shore, flung the chain into the boat, ran to the tiller, took the bar in his hand and stood looking before him; then, after watching the sky for awhile, he called out to the rowers in a loud voice, the boat being now well out to sea, “Row hard, row hard! make haste! the sea

looks ugly, the hag! I feel the swell at the rudder and the storm in my joints!"

These words, said in the hoarse tones of an old sailor, and almost unintelligible to ears not accustomed to the noise of the waves, caused a precipitate, though always measured movement of the oars, — a unanimous movement, as different from that which had preceded it as the trot of a horse is different from its gallop. The distinguished company sitting in the stern took pleasure in watching the vigorous arms of the rowers, the brown faces with their fiery eyes, the strained muscles and diverse human forms, all acting in concert to put them across the straits for a trifling toll. Far from deploring the hardships of such labor, they pointed out to each other, laughing, the grotesque expression which the labor brought into each toil-worn face. Forward, the soldier, the peasant, and the old woman were looking at the sailors with a compassion natural to persons who, living by the sweat of their brow, understand the harsh pains and the feverish fatigues of labor. Besides, accustomed as they were to life in the open air, they understood from the signs in the sky the danger that threatened them, and were grave and anxious. The young mother was rocking her child in her arms and singing him to sleep with an ancient hymn.

"If we get safely over," said the soldier to one of the peasants, "it will be because God has set His mind on our living."

"Ah! He is the master," said the old woman; "I think it is His good pleasure to call us to Himself. Do

you see that light over there?" With a nod of her head she motioned to westward, where lines of fire were cutting sharply through a heavy cloud-bank tinged with crimson, which seemed about to unchain a furious wind. The sea gave forth a muttered sound, an inward roar, like the noise of a dog when he only growls. After all, Ostend was not so far off. At this moment the sea and the sky presented one of those sights to which neither painting nor language can give a longer duration than that they actually have. Human creations require powerful contrasts. Therefore it is that artists ordinarily seize the most vivid phenomena of Nature, despairing, no doubt, of being able to render the grand and glorious poetry of her daily charm, — though the human soul is often as deeply stirred by tranquillity as by movement, by silence as by storm.

There came a moment when every one in the boat kept silence and gazed at the sea and sky, either from apprehension or in obedience to that religious melancholy which takes possession of all of us at the decline of day, at the hour of prayer, the moment when Nature is silent and the bells speak. The sea cast up a wan, white gleam, changing into the colors of steel. The sky was chiefly gray. To the west stretched narrow spaces like streams of blood, while to the eastward dazzling lines, drawn as if with the finest brush, were separated by clouds ridged like the wrinkles on an old man's brow. On all sides the sea and the sky showed a dull, dead ground of neutral tints which threw into strong relief the sinister fires of the setting sun. This

aspect of nature inspired terror. If it is allowable to put the bold figures of the common people into written language, we might say with the soldier that the weather was sounding the retreat, or, with the peasant who answered him, that the sky had the look of an executioner. The wind suddenly rose, coming from the westward, and the captain, who had never ceased to watch the sea, noticing the swell on the horizon, called out, "Hau! hau!" At this cry the sailors stopped rowing and let their oars float on the surface of the water.

"The captain is right," said Thomas, stolidly, when the boat, borne on the crest of an enormous wave, plunged downwards as if into the open jaws of the sea.

At that violent movement, that sudden rage of Ocean, the passengers in the stern grew livid, and cried out in terror, "We shall perish!"

"Oh, not yet!" answered the captain, quietly.

The clouds at this instant were torn apart by the wind exactly above the boat. The gray masses rolled with threatening rapidity to the east and to the west; a twilight gleam fell full upon the passengers through the rent made by the blast, and they saw each other's faces. One and all, nobles and wealthy men, mariners and beggars, were held for a moment in surprise at the aspect of the last-comer. His golden hair, parted in the centre of his calm, serene brow, fell in heavy locks upon his shoulders, outlining upon the iron-gray atmosphere a head sublime in gentleness, from which the Divine Love shone. He did not despise death, for he

was certain of not perishing. But although the persons in the stern forgot for an instant at the sight of this man the storm whose implacable fury threatened them, they soon returned to their selfish feelings and to the habits of their life.

“How lucky for that stupid man that he does not see the danger we are all in,” said the University professor; “he is like a dog who dies without a struggle.”

The learned man had hardly uttered this judicial sentence when the tempest unchained its legions. The winds blew from all quarters; the boat was whirled round like a top, and the sea broke over her.

“Oh, my poor child! my child! Who will save my child?” cried the mother in a heartrending voice.

“You, yourself,” replied the stranger.

The ring of that voice entered the soul of the young woman, and with it hope; she heard the tuneful words above the hissings of the storm, above the cries of the passengers.

“Holy Virgin of Succor! thou of Antwerp! I promise a thousand wax candles and a statue if you will bring me out of this,” cried the burgher, kneeling on his bags of gold.

“The Virgin is not at Antwerp any more than she is here,” declared the professor.

“She is in heaven,” said a voice that seemed to come from the sea.

“Who spoke?”

“It was the devil, for he mocked at the Virgin of Antwerp,” said the servant.

“Let alone your Virgin,” cried the captain to the passengers, “take those buckets and bale the boat. And you,” he added to the sailors, “row steady! we have a moment’s respite; in the name of the devil who leaves you a little longer in this world, let us be our own providence. The straits are frightfully dangerous, as everybody knows, but I have been crossing them these thirty years. Is this the first time, think you, I’ve battled with a storm?”

Then, standing beside the tiller, the captain continued to watch, alternately, the sea, the boat, and the sky.

“He scoffs at everything, the skipper,” said Thomas, in a low voice.

“Will God let us die with those poor wretches?” said the proud young girl to the handsome cavalier.

“No, no, my noble demoiselle. Listen,” he said, putting his arm round her and whispering in her ear. “I can swim, but do not tell it. I will take you by that beautiful hair and draw you gently ashore. But I can save only you.”

The daughter glanced at her mother. The lady was on her knees asking absolution of the bishop, who was not listening to her. The cavalier read a feeble sentiment of filial pity in the eyes of his beautiful mistress, and he said in muffled tones: “Submit to the will of God! If he chooses to call your mother to himself it is doubtless for her happiness—in another world,” he added in a still lower voice. “And for ours in this,” thought he. The lady of Rupelmonde possessed seven fiefs, beside the barony of Gâvres. The daughter lis-

tened to the voice of her own life ; the self-interests of her love spoke by the mouth of the handsome adventurer, — a young miscreant, who haunted churches in search of prey, a girl to marry, or a round sum of money in hand. The bishop blessed the waves and ordered them to be still, though despairing of it ; he thought of his concubine, awaiting him with some delicate repast, perhaps at this moment taking her bath, perfuming and robing herself in velvet, clasping her necklace and putting on her jewels. Far from remembering the powers of holy Church and consoling the people around him by exhorting them to trust in God, the worldly bishop mingled earthly regrets and thoughts of love with the words of his breviary. The gleam from above which lighted these pale faces gave to view their diverse expressions, when suddenly the boat, lifted into the air by a wave, then plunged into the trough of the sea and shaken like a withered leaf whirled by the autumn winds, cracked loudly in its hull and seemed about to go to pieces. Horrible cries arose followed by dreadful silence.

The conduct of the persons sitting in the forward part of the boat contrasted strangely with that of the rich and powerful in the stern. The young mother strained her babe to her breast each time that the waves threatened to engulf the frail vessel ; but she relied on the hope which the stranger had put into her heart ; at each new peril she turned her eyes upon the man and gathered from his face renewed faith, — the faith of a feeble woman, the faith of a mother. Living by the divine word, by the word of love that man had uttered, the

simple creature awaited with confidence the fulfilment of what seemed a promise, and scarcely dreaded danger. The soldier, holding fast to the gunwale of the boat, never took his eyes off the singular being on whose composure he modelled the expression of his own rough and sunburnt face; thus calling into play his intelligence and his will, whose powerful springs were but little weakened or vitiated by the course of a passive and mechanical existence. Emulous of being calm and tranquil like that higher courage before him, he ended by identifying himself, perhaps unconsciously, with the hidden principle of that interior power. His admiration became an instinctive fanaticism, a boundless love, a belief in that man like the enthusiasm that soldiers feel for their leader when he is a man of power, surrounded with the halo of victory, and marching amid the dazzling light of genius. The old beggar-woman kept saying in a low voice, "Ah, wicked sinner that I am! Have I not suffered enough to expiate the joys of my youth? Ah, why, poor wretch! did I lead that life of pleasure? why did I squander the things of God with the servants of the Church, the money of the poor with usurers and extortioners? Ah! I have sinned! My God! my God! let me finish my hell in this world of misery! Or else, — Holy Virgin, mother of God, have pity on me!"

"Take comfort, mother," said the soldier, "the good God is not a usurer. Though I've killed people right and left, the bad and the good together, I am not afraid of the resurrection."

“ Ah! corporal, but how lucky they are, those fine ladies, to have a bishop with them, the saintly man!” said the old creature. “ They will get absolution for their sins. If I could only hear the voice of a priest saying to me, ‘ Your sins are forgiven,’ I could believe it.”

The stranger turned to her, and his merciful look made her quiver.

“ Have faith,” he said, “ and you will be saved.”

“ May God reward you, my good gentleman,” she said. “ If you say true, I will make a pilgrimage with bare feet for you and for me to our Lady of Lorette.”

The two peasants, father and son, were silent, resigned, and submissive to the will of God, like men accustomed to follow instinctively, as an animal does, the propulsion of nature.

So here on one side were riches, knowledge, pride, debauchery, crime, — the whole of human society, such as thought, education, arts, and the laws of man have made it; here also, and on this side only, were cries, terrors, a thousand feelings struggling with frightful doubts, here alone the agony of dread. Above them stood a man of power, — the captain of the boat, — believing and doubting nothing; the king, the fatalist, making himself his own providence, crying out, “ Bale her! bale her!” defying the storm and struggling hand to hand against the sea. At the other end of the little bark behold the weak ones! The mother holding to her bosom the babe smiling at the storm; an old woman, once jovial, now the victim of remorse; a

soldier, crippled with wounds, obtaining no other compensation for his indefatigable devotion than a mutilated life. With barely a crust moistened by sweat to keep life in him, he laughed at all things, went his way without anxiety, happy if he could drown his glory in a pot of beer, or recount it to the children who followed and admired him. Gayly he committed to God the care of his future. Finally, the two peasants, creatures of toil and exhaustion, toil incarnate, the labor by which the whole world lives. These simple beings, unknowing of thought and its treasures and ready to engulf them all for a belief, possessed a faith the more robust because they had never discussed nor analyzed it, — virgin natures in which the conscience continued pure and the feelings powerful. Remorse, misfortune, love, and labor had exercised, purified, concentrated, and increased their will, — the only thing in man which resembles what learned men have called a soul.

When the boat, guided by the marvellous skill of her captain, came in sight of Ostend and was only fifty feet from the shore, she was driven back by a sudden revulsion of the tempest and began to sink. The stranger with the luminous countenance spoke to that little world of anguish, and said, “Those who have faith will be saved; follow me.”

Then he arose and walked with a firm step upon the sea. The young mother clasped her child in her arms and walked beside him. The soldier stood up, saying in his untutored way, “Ha! by my pipe! I’ll follow

thee to the devil," and without seeming to be surprised, he trod the waves. The old woman, the sinner, believing in the power of God, followed the man, and she too walked upon the water. The two peasants said to each other, "If they can walk upon the sea, why cannot we?" and they rose and hurried after them. Thomas wished to do likewise, but his faith failed him; he fell several times into the water, but rose again; then, after three attempts, he, too, walked upon the sea. The bold captain clung like a barnacle to the planks of his boat. The burgher had faith and was about to step upon the sea, but he wished to carry away his gold and the gold carried him to the bottom of the ocean. The man of science, ridiculing the charlatan and the fools who heeded him, laughed as he heard the stranger proposing to the passengers to walk upon water, and the sea swallowed him up. The young girl was dragged to the bottom by her lover. The bishop and the old lady went down, heavy perhaps with crime, but heavier still with unbelief and confidence in graven images, heavy with cant, light of charity and true religion.

The faithful flock, treading with firm feet and dry the plain of angry waters, heard around them the horrible tumult of the storm. Enormous waves broke before them; an unseen force rent the Ocean. In the distance the faithful beheld through the mist a feeble light glimmering from the hut of some fisherman. All, walking courageously toward that light, fancied they heard above the roaring of the sea the

voice of their companions crying, "Courage!" And yet, watchful of their own danger, no one spoke a word. Thus they reached the shore. When all were seated by the fisherman's hearth, they looked about them for their shining guide, but in vain. From the top of a rock against whose base the tempest had flung the captain, still clinging to his plank with the strength displayed by sailors in their struggles with death, THE MAN stepped down and drew in the drowning one, whose force was well-nigh spent, to whom he said, laying the helping hand upon his head, "Safe now, but do it not again; the example is an evil one."

He took the sailor on his shoulders and bore him to the hut. Then, knocking on the door that the hapless man might be admitted to that humble refuge, the Saviour disappeared. Later a Convent of Mercy for the benefit of mariners was built on that spot, where the print on the sand left by the feet of Jesus Christ was long, they say, visible. In 1793, at the time of the entrance of the French into Belgium, the monks carried away this precious relic, the visible sign of the last visit made by Jesus to this Earth.

There it was that, weary of life, I found myself not long after the revolution of 1830. If you had asked the reasons of my despair it would have been impossible for me to tell them to you, so nerveless and fluid had my soul become. The springs of my mind were relaxed by the current of a west wind. The sky was cold and black; the dark clouds passing above my head gave

a sinister expression to Nature. The immensity of the sea — everything said to me: “Death to-day, death to-morrow, death must come at last, and then —” I wandered on, thinking of the uncertain future, of my lost hopes. A prey to many funereal thoughts, I mechanically entered the convent church, whose gray towers looked to me just then like phantoms looming through the sea-mists. I gazed without interest at the forest of columns whose foliated capitals supported the light arches of a labyrinth of aisles. I walked unheeding through the lateral naves which spread before me like those porticoes that double back upon themselves. The dim light of an autumn evening scarcely enabled me to see, above the sculptured key-stones of the arches, the delicate ribs which defined so cleanly the graceful spring of the vaulted roof. The organs were silent. My footsteps alone woke the solemn echoes that lurked in the dark chapels. I sat down beside one of the four pillars that sustained the dome, near the choir. From there I could see the whole interior of the structure, which I gazed at without attaching a single idea to it. The mechanical use of my eyes showed me the imposing array of columns, the tracery of the immense rose-windows, so wonderfully hung above the lateral doors and the great portal, the lofty galleries and the slender shafts which divided the glass windows, topped by arches, by trefoils, or by wreaths, a charming flagee of stone. A dome of glass at the farther end of the choir sparkled as though a mass of precious stones were inserted in it. Contrasting with

the brightness of this cupola, which was partly white and partly colored, were the black shadows of two deep naves on the right and left, in the depths of which the dim shafts of a hundred gray columns were indistinctly visible.

By dint of looking fixedly at these marvellous arcades, these wreaths and spirals and arabesques, these Saracenic fantasies, interlacing with one another and capriciously lighted, my perceptions became confused. I was, in fact, on the confines of illusion and reality, caught in a series of optical snares and bewildered by the multitude of the vistas about me. Little by little those hewn stones faded from my sight, veiled by a cloud of golden dust like that which dances in the sun-rays striking athwart a room. From the bosom of the vaporous atmosphere, which made the outline of all forms indistinct, the lace-work of the rose windows shone forth resplendent. Every line of their tracery, the least detail of their carving was burnished. The sun lighted fires in the glass, whose rich colors glowed. The columns stirred, their capitals swayed softly. A gentle tremor shook the edifice and its friezes nodded with graceful precaution. Several large pillars moved, slowly and with dignity, like the dancing of dowagers who courteously take part in a quadrille at the end of a ball. Certain slim, erect columns, adorned with their trefoil crowns, began to laugh and skip. Pointed arches oscillated with the long, slim windows, which resembled those dames of the middle-ages who wore the armorial bearings of their families emblazoned on their robes.

The dance of the mitred arches with these elegant windows was like the scene of a tournament. Soon every stone of the church vibrated, but did not move from its place. The organs spoke, and I heard a divine harmony in which the voice of angels mingled, — a wondrous music, accompanied by the muffled bass of the bells, which told that the two colossal towers of the church were swaying on their foundations.

This singular gala seemed to me the most natural thing in the world, for what could surprise me after beholding the overthrow of Charles X.? I was myself gently swayed like a swing; and this afforded me a pleasure of the nerves of which it is quite impossible to give an idea. And yet, in the midst of this glowing bacchanalia the choir seemed cold as winter. I saw within it a multitude of women clothed in white, motionless and silent. A few censers shed their soft odors, which penetrated my soul and gladdened it. The tapers flamed; the pulpit, gay as a bard in his cups, rolled like a Chinese image. I perceived that the cathedral itself was whirling with such rapidity that everything in it appeared to keep its place. The colossal Christ above the high altar smiled with a malicious benignity which frightened me; I avoided looking at it, and began to admire a blue vapor gliding among the pillars and lending them an indescribable grace. A few ravishing female faces appeared in the friezes. The cherubs who supported the great columns beat their wings. I felt myself uplifted by some divine power which plunged me into an infinite joy, an ecstasy both soft and ten-

der. I would, I think, have given my life to have prolonged this phantasmagoria, when suddenly a shrill voice sounded in my ear, "Wake up, wake up! follow me!"

A withered woman took my hand and communicated to my nerves a horrible sensation of cold. Her bones could be seen through the wrinkled skin of her livid and almost greenish face. The chilling old creature wore a black gown trailing in the dust, and on her neck some white thing which I dared not examine. Her eyes, raised to heaven, left only their whites in view. She dragged me across the church, marking her path with ashes which fell from her dress. As she walked, her bones rattled like those of a skeleton. I heard behind me the ringing of a bell, whose sharp tones smote my ears like those of an harmonica.

"Men must suffer, men must suffer," she said to me.

We left the church and passed through the filthiest streets of the town; then she brought me to a dingy house and made me enter, crying out in a voice as discordant as a cracked bell: "Defend me! defend me!"

We mounted a winding staircase. She rapped on a dimly lighted door, and a man resembling the familiars of the Inquisition silently opened it. We entered a room hung with ragged tapestries, filled with old rags, old linen, faded muslins, gilded copper.

"Here are the eternal riches," she said.

I shuddered with horror as I now saw distinctly by the light of a tall torch and two wax tapers that this:

woman must have issued recently from a cemetery. She had no hair. I tried to escape; she moved her fleshless arm and circled me in an iron band armed with spikes. At her movement a cry broke forth from millions of voices, the hurrah of the dead, and it echoed round us.

“I will make thee everlastingly happy,” she said. “Thou art my son.”

We were now seated by a hearth on which the ashes were cold. The old creature held my hand so tightly that I was forced to remain. I looked at her fixedly, and tried to guess the history of her life by examining the habiliments in which she was huddled. But was she actually living? It was a mystery. I saw that she must once have been young and beautiful and adorned with the graces of simplicity, a Grecian statue with the virginal brow.

“Ha! ha!” I cried, “now I recognize you. Miserable woman, why did you prostitute yourself to men? You grew rich in the heyday of your passions, and you forgot your pure and fragrant youth, your sublime devotions, your innocent principles, your fruitful beliefs. You abdicated your primitive power, your supremacy wholly intellectual, to gain the powers of the flesh. Abandoning your linen vestments, your mossy couch, your grottoes illumined with divine lights, you have sparkled in diamonds, in luxury, and in lust. Proud, insolent, desiring all things, obtaining all things, overthrowing all things that were in your way, like a prostitute in vogue who pursues her pleasure, you have been

sanguinary as a queen besotted by will. Do you not recall how stupid you have been at times ; then, suddenly, miraculously intelligent, like Art issuing from an orgy? Poet, painter, singer, lover of all splendid ceremonies, your protection of the arts was, perhaps, no more than a caprice, the delight of sleeping beneath the treasures of its magnificence. There came a day when you, fantastic and insolent — you who were born to be chaste and modest! — you subjected all things to your feet and flung your slipper on the head of sovereigns possessed of power, and money, and the genius of this world! Insulting man, you found pleasure in seeing how far human folly could go; you made your lovers crawl on all fours, give you their possessions, their wealth, their wives even — if they were worth anything! You have destroyed without motive millions of men; you have scattered them like sand-clouds before the whirlwind from West to East. You descended from the heights of thought to sit by the side of kings. Woman! instead of consoling men you have tormented them, afflicted them. Sure of obtaining it, you demanded blood! And yet you could have been happy on a handful of flour, brought up as you were to eat bread and mingle water with your wine. Original in all things, you forbade your exhausted lovers to eat food, and they did not eat. Why did you push your madness to excess and desire the impossible? Why did you dote on folly like some courtesan spoiled by adorers? why did you not undeceive those who explained or justified your errors? The final day came, and you reached your

last passions. Terrible as the love of a woman of forty, you blushed! you sought to strangle the whole universe in a last embrace, but the universe, which was yours, has escaped you! After the young men, the old men and the impotent fell at your feet, and they have made you hideous. Nevertheless, a few with eagle eyes have known you and said to you with a look: ‘Thou shalt perish without glory because thou deceivedst, and because thou hast broken the promises of thy youth. Instead of being an angel with a brow of peace, instead of spreading light and happiness along thy way, thou hast been a Messalina, loving the games and debaucheries, and abusing thy power. Thou canst not again be virgin; a master is needful to thee. Thy time has come. Death is upon thee. Thine heirs think thee rich; they will kill thee, but they will get nothing. Fling aside those old garments that are out of date, and become once more what thou once wert. But no! thou hast committed suicide!’—Is not that the truth?” I said; “does it not tell your history? old, decrepit, toothless, cold, and now forgotten so that men pass you without a look! Why do you live on? Why seek to entice when no one desires to follow you? What have you? Where is your wealth? did you waste it? Where are your treasures? What have you done that is glorious?”

At this question the old woman rose on her skeleton legs, flung off her rags, grew taller, full of light, smiled, and came out of her black chrysalis. Then, like a new-born butterfly, a tropical creature issuing from the

palms, she stood before me young and beautiful, robed in a linen garment. Her golden hair floated on her shoulders, her eyes sparkled, a luminous cloud was about her, a golden halo hovered above her head. She made a gesture toward space, waving a fiery sword. "See and believe!" she said.

Suddenly I saw in the distance thousands of cathedrals like the one I had just quitted; all were adorned with pictures and frescos. I heard delightful music. Around the structures millions of men were swarming like ants on an anthill. Some were endeavoring to save books and to copy manuscripts; others were succoring the poor; all were studying. Among these innumerable crowds were colossal statues erected by them. A peculiar light, projected by some luminary as mighty as the sun, enabled me to read on the pedestals of these statues the words: SCIENCES; HISTORY; LITERATURES.

The light went out. I found myself before the young girl, who gradually sank into her chilly frame, her mortuary tatters, and became once more an aged creature. Her familiar brought a little peat with which to renew the ashes of her foot-warmer, for the weather was cold; then he lighted — for her who once had thousands of wax tapers in her palaces — a little oil-lamp, that she might see to read her prayers in the night.

"There is no Belief now," she said.

Such was the situation in which I beheld the noblest, truest, fruitfullest, and most gigantic of all powers.

“Wake up, monsieur, we are going to loek the doors,” said a hoarse voiee.

Turning round, I saw the horrid face of the giver of holy water, who had shaken me by the arm. The cathedral was buried in shadow, like a man wrapped in a cloak.

“To believe,” I said to myself, “is to live! I have lately seen the obsequies of a Monarchy; we must now defend THE CHURCH.”

THE EXILES.

PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES.

THE EXILES.

ALMÆ SORORI.

IN 1308 only a few houses stood upon the tract of ground formed by the alluvial soil and sand of the Seine above the Cité and behind the church of Notre-Dame. The man who first dared to build upon this barren spot, so liable to frequent inundations, was a police officer of Paris who had rendered certain trifling services to the clergy of the chapter of Notre-Dame, in return for which the bishop had leased to him twenty-five perches of the said land, remitting all quit-rents and fees for the privilege of building.

Seven years before the day on which this history begins, Joseph Tirechair, one of the harshest police officers in Paris, as his name perhaps indicates, had, thanks to his share in the fines collected by him for misdemeanors committed in the streets of the Cité, built his house on the bank of the Seine, at the very extremity of the rue du Port-Saint-Landry. To guarantee the safety of the merchandise landed on the wharf the town had built a sort of stone abutment, which protected the piles of the wharf from the action

of the water and the ice, and may still be seen on some of the old maps of Paris. The sergeant had profited by this structure to place his house upon it, and thus it happened that he was obliged to go up several steps to reach his home.

Like all the houses of that day, the little dwelling was surmounted by a pointed roof which overhung the façade, giving the upper part the shape of a lozenge. To the regret of archæologists, there are not more than two or three such roofs now remaining in Paris. A round opening lighted the garret in which the wife of the sergeant dried the lincn of the Chapter; for she had the honor to wash for Notre-Dame, certainly no slight affair. On the first floor were two chambers, each of which was let, year by year, to strangers for forty sous parisis (an ancient coin); — a great price, justified only by the luxury which Tirechair had put into their furnishing. The walls were hung with Dutch tapestries; large beds with testers of green serge, like those of the peasantry, were liberally supplied with mattresses and good sheets of fine linen. Each room had its heater, a sort of stove which need not be described. The floors, carefully kept in order by the laundry apprentices, shone like the wood of a shrine. Instead of mere stools to sit upon, the tenants had large arm-chairs of carved walnut, the spoil, no doubt, of some pillaged castle. Two chests inlaid with pewter and a table with twisted legs in each room completed an equipment that was thought worthy of the most eminent knights banneret whom private affairs might bring to Paris.

The windows of the two chambers looked out upon the river. From one you could only see the shores of the Seine and three desert islands, two of which have since been united and now form the Île Saint-Louis ; the third was the Île Louviers. From the other could be seen, across an opening of the Port Saint-Landry (the quarter called La Grève), the bridge of Notre-Dame with its houses, and the high towers of the Louvre, recently built by Philip-Augustus, looking down upon this poor, puny Paris, which suggests to the imagination of modern poets so many false marvels.

The lower floor of the house of Tirechair (to use the common expression of those days) contained a large room where his wife did her laundry work, and through which the lodgers had to pass to reach their rooms by a staircase as winding as that of a mill. Farther on was the kitchen and a bedroom, both of which looked to the Seine. A little garden, redeemed from the current, spread patches of onions and green cabbages at the foot of this humble abode, while several feet of rose-bushes, protected by stakes, formed a species of hedge. A shed, made of wood and mud, served as the kennel of a large dog, a necessary guardian for the lonely house. Beside this shed was an enclosed space where clucked the hens whose eggs were sold to the Chapter. Here and there on the barren ground, muddy or dry according to the caprices of Parisian weather, grew a few small trees, — constantly lashed by the wind, broken and defaced by loungers, — stunted willows, reeds, and tall grass. This tract of ground, the

Seine, the wharf, and the house, were closed in toward the west by the enormous basilica of Notre-Dame, which cast, at the pleasure of the sun, its cold, gray shadow over them. In those days, as now, Paris contained no spot more lonely, no scene more solemn or more melancholy. The loud voice of the waters, the chanting of the priests, the whistling of the wind, alone broke the silence of this species of jungle, where occasionally a few lovers landed to whisper secrets at hours when the services kept the clergy in their church.

One evening in the month of April of the year 1308 Tirechair came home unusually out of temper. For three days past everything had gone on well in the public streets. In his quality of police officer nothing annoyed him more than to feel himself useless. He flung down his halberd angrily, growled out a few disjointed words as he pulled off his jerkin and put on a shabby spencer made of camlet. Taking a slice of bread from the pan and spreading a layer of butter upon it, he sat down on a bench and looked round at his four white-washed walls, counted the joists of his ceiling, took an inventory of his household utensils hanging on nails, fumed at the evidences of a care that left him nothing to complain of, and looked at his wife, who said not a word as she ironed the albs and surplices of the sacristy.

“By my soul!” he said, by way of opening the conversation, “I don’t know where you pick up your apprentices, Jacqueline! Look at that one,” pointing to a woman who was folding an altar cloth rather

awkwardly. "Hey! the more I look at her the more she seems to me a girl who is ready for mischief; she's not one of your good stout country wenches. Why, her hands are as white as a lady's! Day of God! if her hair does n't smell of scent! And her hose are as fine as a queen's! No, by the double horn of Mohammed, things are not going to my liking here!"

The woman colored, and looked at Jacqueline with an air that expressed both fear and dignity. The washerwoman answered the look with a smile; then she left her work and said in a sharp voice to her husband: —

"Come, don't make me angry. You need n't accuse me of any underhand dealing. Trot your pavement your own way, but don't meddle with what goes on here, except to sleep in peace and drink your wine, and eat whatever I put before you. If not, I sha'n't trouble myself any longer to keep you in health and happiness. I'd like to know where in all this town one could find a man happier than that old monkey!" she cried, making a reproachful face at him. "He has money in his wallet, a house of his own, a trusty halberd on one side, and virtuous wife on the other; a home as clean, ay, as neat as my eye; and here he is complaining like a pilgrim burning with Saint Anthony's fire!"

"Ha!" retorted the sergeant, "do you think, Jacqueline, that I want to see my house razed to the ground, my halberd in the hands of somebody else, and my wife in the pillory!"

Jacqueline and the delicate-looking workwoman turned pale.

"Explain what you mean," said the washerwoman, "and let's see what you've got in your pouch. I have noticed for some days, my lad, that there was some nonsense in your head. Come, tell over your beads! You must be a coward to mind petty taunts when you carry the halberd of the *Parloir aux Bourgeois*, and live under the protection of the Chapter."

So saying, she marched straight to the sergeant and took him by the arm. "Come," she added, obliging him to rise and leading him out on to the steps.

When they were in the little garden and close to the edge of the water, Jacqueline looked at her husband with a sarcastic air.

"You had better know, you old vagabond, that every time that fine lady comes to the house a gold piece goes into our savings."

"Ho! ho!" said the sergeant, who became thoughtful and quiet when alone with his wife. But presently he began again, "We are lost! why does that woman come here?"

"She comes to see the pretty lad we have up there," replied Jacqueline, pointing to the chamber which overlooked the course of the Seine.

"A curse upon it!" cried the sergeant; "for a few miserable crowns you have ruined me, Jacqueline. Is that the sort of traffic the prudent and virtuous wife of a police officer should engage in? Be she countess or baroness, that lady couldn't pull us out of the scrape

you will get us into sooner or later. There'll be a husband furious and powerful, for, by the Lord! she's handsome enough."

"There! there! she's a widow, you old goose! How dare you suspect your wife of wickedness and nonsense? The lady has never spoken to the young fellow; she is content to look at him and think about him. Poor boy! if it were not for her he'd be dead with hunger; she has been half a mother to him. And he, the cherub, he's as easy to deceive as a new-born babe. He thinks his poor pennies are lasting still, whereas he has eaten them up twice over in the last six months."

"Wife," said the sergeant, solemnly, pointing to the place de Grève, "do you remember the flames you saw the other day in which they roasted that Danish woman?"

"What then?" said Jacqueline, frightened.

"What then!" echoed Tirechair; "why, those two strangers we are lodging upstairs smell of fire likewise. There is no Chapter, nor countess, nor any protection at all against them. Here is Easter coming, and out of our house they go, and fast and quick, too! Do you suppose a sergeant of police can't tell a gallows-bird when he sees one. Our two lodgers kept company with that woman, that Danish heretic, — or Norwegian, I don't know which, — I mean the one you heard give her last shriek. Ha! she was a brave devil, she never quailed at those fagots; which abundantly proves her intimacy with Satan. I saw her as near as I now see

you ; she went on preaching to the crowd, telling them she was in heaven and saw God ! I tell you that since that day I have n't been able to sleep in peace. He whom we've got upstairs is more of a sorcerer than a Christian. By my faith ! I tremble every time that old man passes me. At night he never sleeps. If I happen to wake up, his voice is sounding like the hum of bells ; I hear him saying over his incantations in the language of hell. Did you ever see him eat an honest crust of bread, or a roll made by the hands of a Catholic baker ? That brown skin of his has been roasted to a cinder at the fires of hell. Day of God ! his eyes can charm you like those of a snake ! Jacqueline, I tell you I won't have those two men in our house any longer. I live too near to Justice not to know that a man had better keep out of her way. You are to turn our two lodgers out, — the old one because I suspect him, and the young one because he is too pretty. Neither of them seems to have Christian friends, — they certainly don't live as we do ; the young one is always gazing at the moon and the stars and the clouds, like a witch watching for midnight to mount her broom. The old sly one uses that poor boy for some witchcraft or other, I am certain. I won't risk bringing down the fires of heaven upon my head ; they must go. That's my last word. Don't flinch."

In spite of her despotism in her own home, Jacqueline was dumfounded by this indictment fulminated by the sergeant against his two lodgers. Happening at the moment to glance at the window of the room occupied

by the old man, she trembled with terror as she suddenly beheld that sombre, melancholy face and profound look, which made even the sergeant tremble, accustomed as he was to the sight of criminals.

At this epoch every one, little and great, clergy and laity, all trembled at the thought of supernatural power. The word "magic" was as potent as a leper to quench feelings, sunder social ties, and freeze the pity of all hearts, even the most generous. The sergeant's wife suddenly bethought herself that she had never seen her two lodgers do any act that proved them human creatures. Though the voice of the younger was soft and melodious as the notes of a flute, she heard it so seldom that she was now tempted to consider it a proof of sorcery. Recalling the extreme beauty of the lad's face, so pure and glowing, his blond hair and the liquid fire of his eye, she fancied she could perceive the snares of Satan. She remembered how for days together she had never heard the slightest noise from the rooms of the two strangers. Where were they during all those long hours? Suddenly other very singular circumstances crowded into her memory. She was completely terrified, and now believed she saw a proof of magic arts in the love which the rich lady bore to the lad Gottfried, — a poor orphan who had come from Flanders to Paris to study at the University. She put her hand quickly into her pocket and drew out four large silver pieces called *livres tournois*, and looked at them with a mixture of avarice and fear.

"That certainly is n't counterfeit money," she said,

showing the coins to her husband. "Besides," she added, "how can we turn them out when they have paid the rent in advance for the coming year?"

"Ask the dean of the Chapter," replied the sergeant. "It is certainly his place to tell us how to conduct ourselves with such extraordinary beings."

"Yes, yes, very extraordinary!" said Jacqueline. "See the malice of it! to come and plant themselves within the very pale of the Church! But," she continued, "before I consult the dean, had'n't I better warn that noble lady of the risk she is running?"

Saying these words, Jacqueline, with the sergeant, who had certainly not missed his shot, re-entered the house. Tirechair, as became a man trained in the wiles of his business, pretended to take the unknown lady for an ordinary workwoman, — though the awe of a courtier in presence of a royal incognito was visible beneath his apparent indifference. Six o'clock was striking from the tower of Saint-Denis-du-Pas, a little church which stood between Notre-Dame and the quay Saint-Landry, the first cathedral ever built in Paris, and on the very spot, so the chronicles say, where Saint Denis was put upon his gridiron. Instantly the hour of day flew from clock to clock throughout the Cité. Then confused cries were heard coming from the left bank of the Seine behind Notre-Dame, in the region where the various schools of the University swarmed. At this signal the elder of the two lodgers began to move about his room. The sergeant, his wife, and the unknown lady heard the abrupt opening and shutting of a door, and then the

heavy step of the stranger sounding on the stairway. The sergeant's new-born suspicions gave a deep interest to the appearance of this personage, and his face and his wife's assumed so startled an expression that even the lady was influenced by it. Connecting, like all who truly love, the alarm of the couple with the lad in whom she was so much interested, the lady awaited with a sort of uneasiness some approaching trouble which the evident fear of her pretended employers indicated.

The stranger stood for a moment on the threshold of the door to examine the three persons who were in the room, and seemed to be looking for his companion. The glance which he cast, indifferent as it was, troubled the hearts of those present. It would have been impossible for any one, even a man of firm mind, not to admit that Nature had imparted extraordinary powers of some kind to this being, in appearance supernatural. Though his eyes were deeply sunken beneath the great arches outlined by the eyebrows, they were, like those of a falcon, surrounded by such broad eyelids and bordered by a black circle so strongly marked above the cheeks that their balls seemed actually to project. Those magic eyes had something unspeakably despotic and piercing in them, which grasped the soul of a spectator with a weighty glance that was full of thought, — a look both brilliant and lucid, like that of snakes or birds, and which paralyzed the recipients or crushed them under the instantaneous communication of a great sorrow or some superhuman power. The rest of his person was in keeping with that leaden fiery glance, fixed yet mo-

bile, stern and calm. Though in that grand eagle eye earthly tumults seemed in a measure stilled, the face, lean and worn, bore traces of unhappy passions, and also of great deeds accomplished. The nose descended in a straight line so far that the nostrils seemed to hold it back. The bones of the face were sharply defined by the wrinkles which furrowed the withered cheeks. Every hollow of that visage was gloomy. You might have thought it the bed of a torrent, where the violence of the rushing flood was proved by the depth of the furrows that revealed some awful and eternal struggle. Like the lines left upon the water by the oars of a boat, broad folds of skin falling away from each side of his nose, strongly emphasized the face, and gave to his mouth, which was firm and without curves, a character of bitter sadness. Above the tempest painted on that face, the tranquil brow rose with a sort of valor, and crowned it with a marble dome.

The stranger maintained the grave, intrepid bearing of a man accustomed to misfortune and formed by nature to confront composedly a raging crowd, and to look danger in the face. He seemed to move in a sphere of his own, where he soared above humanity. His gesture, like his glance, possessed an irresistible power; his emaciated hands were those of a warrior; if others must needs lower their eyes when his eyes plunged into them, it was equally impossible not to tremble when by speech or gesture he addressed the soul. He walked enshrined in silent majesty, like a despot without guards, a god without a nimbus. His

clothing added to the ideas inspired by the singularities of his countenance and demeanor. The soul, the body, and the garments harmonized in a way to impress even the coldest imagination. He wore a kind of surplice of black cloth without sleeves, which fastened in front and fell some distance below the knee, leaving the throat bare and without collar. The close-fitting tunic and the boots were black. On his head was a velvet cap like that of a priest, which encircled his forehead with a line unbroken by the escape of a single hair. It was the deepest and gloomiest mourning raiment that ever man put on. Were it not for the long sword hanging at his side from a leathern belt, whose clasp could be seen at an opening of the black surplice, an ecclesiastic might have greeted him as a brother. Though of medium height he appeared tall; looking into his face, he seemed gigantic.

“The clock has struck, the boat is ready, are you not coming?”

At these words, spoken by the old man in bad French and easily heard in the dead silence, a light movement was made in the other chamber, and the young man came down the stairs with the rapidity of a bird. When Gottfried appeared the lady's face grew crimson; she trembled, shuddered, and put up her hands as if to veil herself. Every woman would have shared her emotion at the sight of this young man, apparently about twenty years of age, whose form and figure were so slender and delicate that he seemed at first sight to be either a child or a disguised young girl. His black

cap, like a Basqueberetta, left to sight a white forehead, pure as the snow, where grace and innocence sparkled and a divine sweetness shone, the reflection of a soul perfect in faith. The imagination of a poet would have seen upon it the star which a mother in some nursery tale, I know not which, entreats the fairy-godmother to lay upon the brow of her infant abandoned like Moses to the will of the stream. Love breathed in the golden locks which fell upon his shoulders. His throat, a true swan's neck, was white and charmingly round. His blue eyes, limpid and full of life, seemed to reflect the sky. The features of his face, the shape of his brow were of a delicacy, a transcendence fit to enrapture a poet. That flower of beauty which in the faces of women fills us with such speechless emotion, the exquisite purity of lines and a luminous halo surrounding the adorable features, were joined in delicious contrast with manly tints and a power that was still adolescent. It was, in fact, one of those melodious faces which, though mute, speak to us and win us; and yet, if observed with attention, it was possible to detect a species of blight, caused by some great thought or passion, in the fresh purity which made the youth resemble a young leaf unfolding in the sunshine. No contrast was ever more abrupt or more vivid than that presented by the association of these two beings. The sight was like that of a graceful fragile shrub growing in the hollow of an old willow stripped by time, furrowed by lightning, gnarled, decrepit, majestic, the admiration of painters, under shelter of whose trunk a

tender bush is growing safe from storm. The one was a God, the other an angel; one the poet who feels, the other the poet who interprets, — a suffering prophet, and a praying Levite. The two passed by in silence.

“Did you notice how he whistled him down?” cried the sergeant the moment the footsteps of the two strangers sounded on the gravelly shore. “Is n’t that the devil and his page?”

“Ouf!” cried Jacqueline. “I am suffocating. I never examined them so closely before. It is a great misfortune for us women that the devil can wear such a pretty face.”

“Throw some holy water on him and you’ll see him change to a toad,” cried Tirechair. “I shall go and state the whole thing to the authorities.”

Hearing these words, the lady roused herself from the revery into which she had sunk and looked at the sergeant who was putting on his blue and red coat.

“Where are you going?” she said.

“To inform the magistrates in self-defence that we are harboring sorcerers.”

The lady smiled.

“I am the Countess Mahaut,” she said, rising with a dignity which set the sergeant aghast. “Be careful not to trouble your guests in any way. Show the utmost respect to the old man especially; I have seen him in the presence of your king, who welcomed him courteously. You will be very ill-advised if you cause him the least annoyance. As to my visits to your house, say nothing about them if you value your life.”

The countess said no more and fell back into thought. Presently, however, she raised her head, made a sign to Jacqueline, and the two went upstairs to Gottfried's chamber. The beautiful countess looked at the bed, the wooden chairs, the chest, the tapestries, the table, with a joy like that of an exile who sees on his return the clustering roofs of his native town nestling at the foot of a mountain.

"If you have not deceived me," she said to Jacqueline, "I will give you a hundred gold crowns."

"See, madame," said the landlady, "the poor angel has no distrust; here are all his possessions."

So saying, Jacqueline opened the table-drawer and showed a number of parchments.

"Oh, God of Mercy!" cried the countess, seizing a deed which caught her eye, and reading on it: "Gothofredus Comes Gantiacus" — "Gottfried, Count of Ghent."

She let the parchment fall and passed her hand across her brow; then, unwilling no doubt to compromise herself by allowing Jacqueline to witness her emotion, she resumed her cold manner.

"I am satisfied," she said.

Then she went down stairs and left the house. The sergeant and his wife stood in their doorway and saw her take the path to the pier. A boat was moored close by. When the sound of her footsteps made itself heard, a man rose suddenly, helped the lady to seat herself in the skiff, and then rowed away at a pace which sent the boat skimming like a swallow down the current of the Seine.

*“ So saying, Jacqueline opened the table-drawer and
showed a number of parchments.”*



Jules Guadet

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Procede Goupil

“What a fool you are!” said Jacqueline, tapping the sergeant familiarly on the shoulder. “We have earned one hundred golden crowns this day.”

“I don’t like lords for lodgers any more than I do sorcerers. I don’t know which of them are most likely to bring us to the gibbet,” answered Tirechair, taking his halberd. “I am going on my rounds through Champfleuri,” he added. “May God protect us, and send some street girl in my way with her earrings blazing in the dark like glowworms.”

Jacqueline, left alone in the house, went hastily upstairs into the room of the old man to see if she could find some clue to this mysterious affair. Like men of science who take such infinite pains to complicate the simplest and most obvious facts of nature, she had already constructed a vague romance which explained to her thinking the meeting of the three personages under her poor roof. She ransacked the chest and examined everything, but failed to find anything extraordinary. There was nothing on the table except an inkstand and some sheets of parchment with writing on them; but as she could not read, the latter afforded her no information. A womanly sentiment carried her back to the chamber of the handsome young man, from the window of which she saw her two lodgers crossing the Seine in the ferryman’s boat.

“They are like a pair of statues,” she said to herself. “Ah! they are going to land at the rue du Fouarre. Isn’t he nimble, the little darling? he skipped ashore like a bulfinch! The old one is like a stone saint in

the cathedral compared to him. They are going to the old school of the Quatre-Nations. There! they are out of sight. This is where he breathes, the poor cherub," she went on, looking round at the furniture of the room. "Is n't he dainty and sweet? Ah! these lords, they are made of other stuff than we."

Thereupon Jacqueline went down stairs after passing her hand over the coverlet of the bed, dusting the chest, and asking herself for the hundredth time, "How the devil does he spend his blessed days? He can't always be looking at the blue sky and the stars God has hung up there for lanterns. The dear child has got some grief on his mind. But why the old master and he scarcely ever speak to each other I can't make out." Then she lost herself in thoughts which presently in her female brain tangled themselves up like a skein of thread.

The old man and the young one entered one of the schools which, at the period of which we write, rendered the rue du Foin famous throughout Europe. The illustrious Sigier, the famous doctor of mystical theology in the University of Paris, was just ascending his rostrum as Jacqueline's lodgers reached the École des Quatre-Nations held in a large low hall on a level with the street. The cold stone floor was garnished with fresh straw, on which a goodly number of students were kneeling on one knee, the other being raised in front of them to take down the improvisation of the master in those short-hand characters which are the despair of modern chirographic decipherers. The hall

was full, not with scholars only but also with the most distinguished men among the clergy, the court, and the judiciary. Learned foreigners, men of the sword, and rich bourgeois, were likewise present. There could be seen those broad faces, protuberant brows, and venerable beards which inspire us with a sort of religious awe for our ancestors as they appear to us in the portraits of the Middle Ages. Lean faces with brilliant sunken eyes, surmounted by skulls yellow with the toils of a powerless scholasticism (the favorite passion of the period) contrasted with ardent young faces and grave, inquiring old ones, with warlike heads, and the rubicund cheeks of financiers. These lessons, dissertations, public arguments held by the greatest geniuses of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, excited the enthusiasm of our forefathers and were, indeed, their bull-fights, their opera, their drama, their ballet, in a word, their whole theatre. The presentation of mysteries did not come until after these brilliant mind combats, which, perhaps, led the way to the French stage. An eloquent improvisation which combined the attractions of the human voice cleverly managed with the subtleties of eloquence and a bold research into God's secrets, satisfied curiosity, kindled the soul, and was in fact the theatre in vogue. Theology not only included the sciences but it was science itself, like grammar among the Greeks in ancient times. It afforded a fruitful future to those who distinguished themselves in these word duels where, like Jacob, the orators wrestled with the Spirit of God. Ambassadors, umpires between sovereigns, chancellors, and

ecclesiastical dignitaries were among the men whose tongues were practised in theological controversy. The academic chair was the tribune of the age; and the system lasted until the day when Rabclais gave a death-blow to sophistry by his terrible sarcasm, just as Cervantes killed chivalry with a written comedy.

To understand that extraordinary age, and the intellect which created masterpieces unknown at the present day, and to explain it all to our own minds, it is enough to study the history and system of the University of Paris and examine the curious methods of instruction then in full vigor. Theology was divided into two Faculties: that of Theology properly so-called; and that of Decree. The Faculty of Theology had three sections: the Scholastic, the Canonical, and the Mystical. It would be irksome to explain the province of these various branches, since only one, the Mystical, is the subject of this study. Mystical Theology embraced the whole study of Divine Revelation and the explanation of Mysteries. This branch of ancient theology is still secretly held in honor among us. Jacob Boehm, Swedenborg, Martinez Pasqualis, Saint-Martin, Molinos, Mesdames Guyon, Bourignon, and Krudener, the great sect of Ecstatics, and that of the Illuminati have, at different epochs, faithfully handed down the doctrines of this science whose object has indeed something awful and gigantic in it. In these days, as in those of Doctor Sigier, it means the gift of wings to man to penetrate into the sanctuary where God conceals himself from human eyes.

This digression is necessary to the full comprehension of the scene which the old man and the young one had crossed the river to take part in. It may also serve to protect this study from the criticism of severe judges who might otherwise consider our story false or tax it with hyperbole.

Doctor Sigier was very tall and in the vigor of his age. Rescued from oblivion by the annals of the university, his face offers striking analogies to that of Mirabeau. It was stamped with the seal of eloquence, impetuous, ardent, and terrible eloquence. On his brow were the signs of a religious belief and a fervent faith, lacking, of course, to his counterpart. His voice was gifted with persuasive sweetness, a ring that was both clear and winning.

At this hour the daylight, grudgingly admitted by the leaded panes of the windows, colored the assembly with capricious tints, creating violent contrasts here and there by the mixture of light and shadow. Here, in a dark corner, sparkled eager eyes; there, masses of black hair played upon by the light seemed actually luminous above faces which were in heavy shadow. A few discrowned heads, circled with a slender fringe of white hair, appeared in the midst of the crowd, like battlements touched by the moonlight. All faces, mute and impatient, were turned towards the doctor. The monotonous voices of the professors in the adjoining schools could be heard in the silent street like the murmuring of a distant tide. The footsteps of the two strangers as they drew near

attracted general attention. Doctor Sigier, who was about to begin his address, saw the majestic old man standing at the entrance, glanced hastily about him for a seat, and seeing none, so great was the crowd, came down with an air of deep respect and placed him on the platform of the rostrum, giving him his own seat. The company greeted this attention with a murmur of approval, recognizing in the old man the hero of an admirable treatise lately discussed at the Sorbonne. The stranger cast upon the audience, above whom he was now placed, that awful look which uttered a whole poem of sorrows, and they on whom the look fell trembled with indescribable emotions. The lad, who followed the old man, seated himself on a step and leaned against the doctor's desk in a charming attitude of grace and melancholy. The silence grew intense; the doorways and even the street were crowded with students who had deserted the other classes.

Doctor Sigier was on this occasion to sum up in a final discourse the theories which he had put forth in his preceding lectures on the resurrection and on heaven and hell. His singular doctrines answered to the sympathies of his epoch, and satisfied the overweening desires for the miraculous which torture men in all ages of the world. This effort of a man to grasp an infinite which ceaselessly eluded his feeble hands, this last struggle of thought with itself, was a work worthy of an assembly made brilliant by the presence of many of the great lights of the century, among whom now shone the highest, perhaps, of all human imaginations.

The doctor began by simply recalling in a quiet tone and without emphasis the principal points which he had already established.

“No intelligence was the exact equal of another. Had man the right to arraign his Creator for the inequalities of the moral powers bestowed on each one? Without expecting to penetrate at once the designs of God, must we not consider it a fact that, by reason of their general unlikeness, intelligences should be divided into spheres. From the sphere in which the lowest intelligence works to that of the most translucent where souls perceive the path to heaven, was there not a positive gradation in spirituality? Did not spirits belonging to the same sphere comprehend each other fraternally in soul, in flesh, in thought, in feeling?”

At this point the doctor developed marvellous theories relative to the sympathies. He explained in Biblical language the phenomena of love, the instinctive repulsions, the keen attractions which disregard all laws of space, the sudden cohesion of souls who seem to recognize each other. As to the different degrees of strength of which our affections are susceptible, he resolved this question by the greater or lesser distance from the centres which the beings occupy in their respective circles. He revealed, mathematically, a great thought of God in the co-ordination of the various human spheres. In man, he said, these spheres created an intermediate world between the intelligence of the brute and the intelligence of the angels. According to him, the *divine* Word nourished the *spiritual* Word,

the spiritual Word nourished the *living* Word, the living Word nourished the *animal* Word, the animal Word nourished the *vegetable* Word, and the vegetable Word expressed the life of the *sterile* Word. These successive transformations of the chrysalis which God imposes upon our souls, and this species of infusorial life which from one zone to another is communicated with ever increasing life, spirituality, and perception, explained confusedly, but perhaps marvellously enough for his inexperienced auditors, the movement impressed by the Most High upon Nature. Supporting himself by numerous passages from Scripture, which he used as a commentary upon himself, to express by actual images the abstract arguments he was unable to produce, he waved the Spirit of God like a torch through the depths of creation, with an eloquence that was all his own and in accents which persuaded his auditors to conviction. Developing this mysterious system, with its consequences, he gave the key of all symbols, vocations, special gifts, all genius, and human talents. He explained the animal resemblances depicted on human faces by primordial analogies and by the ascendant movement of creation. He made his hearers follow the play of Nature, assigning a mission, a future to minerals, plants, and animals. Bible in hand, and after spiritualizing Matter and materializing Spirit, after showing that the will of God entered into all things, and impressing respect for His minutest works, he admitted the possibility of passing at once by Faith from one sphere to another.

This was the first part of his discourse and he applied these doctrines by adroit digressions to the feudal system. Religious and profane poetry, the abrupt and startling eloquence of the period played a large part in this great thesis, into which the philosophic systems of antiquity were fused and out of which the doctor brought them elucidated, purified, and remodelled. The false dogmas of the two principles and those of pantheism were swept away by words which proclaimed the Divine unity and left to God and his angels the knowledge of ends, the means of which were so dazzlingly magnificent to the eyes of men. Armed with demonstrations by which he explained the material world, Doctor Sigier constructed a spiritual world whose spheres, rising gradually, separated us from God just as a plant is separated from us by an infinity of gradations through which it passes. He peopled the heavens, the stars, the planets, the sun. In the name of Saint Paul he invested men with a new power; he showed them their birthright of ascending from world to world to the sources of Life Eternal. The mystic ladder of Jacob was at once the religious formula of that divine secret and the traditional proof of the fact. He travelled through space, bearing the eager souls of his hearers on the wings of his speech; making them feel the Infinite and plunging them in the waves of the celestial ocean. The doctor likewise explained hell logically by other circles or gradations placed inversely to the brilliant spheres which rose to God, where suffering and darkness took the place of

light and spirit. Tortures were made as comprehensible as joy. Terms of comparison were found in the transitions of human life, in its diverse atmospheres of pain and of intelligence. Thus the most startling fables as to hell and purgatory were elucidated as natural realities.

He deduced in a wonderful manner the fundamental causes of our virtues. The religious man, living in poverty, proud of his conscience, at peace with himself, steadfastly resolved not to lie in his heart in spite of all spectacles of triumphant vice, was an angel, fallen and punished, who remembered his origin, foresaw his recompense, accomplished his task, and thus obeyed his glorious mission. The sublime resignations of Christianity were portrayed in all their glory. He put the martyrs at their stake and stripped them of half their merit by robbing them of their sufferings. He showed their *inward angel* in the heavens, while their outward man was seared by the irons of the executioner. He drew a picture of angels among men and made them recognizable by certain celestial signs. He searched the inmost recesses of the understanding for the meaning of the word *fall*, which is found in every language. He recalled significant traditions to demonstrate the truth of our origin. He explained with the utmost clearness the passion existing in all men to raise themselves, to rise higher and higher, an instructive ambition, the perpetual revelation within us of our destiny. He forced his hearers to embrace at a glance the whole universe, and described the substance of God

as flowing with full banks like a mighty river from the centre to the extremities, from the extremities to the centre. Nature, he declared, was one and homological. In the puniest atom as in the greatest work all obeyed this law. Each creation contained in miniature an exact reproduction of one image, be it the sap of a plant, the blood of a man, or the course of the planets. He piled proof on proof; ever fashioning his thought by a melodious gift of poetry. All objections he stated and met boldly, while he himself arraigned with eloquent interpellation the monumental work of our sciences, and the superadded deeds of men, to the doing of which society called into requisition the elements of the terrestrial world. He asked if our wars, our misfortunes, our degradations, hindered the grand movement ordained of God for all his worlds. He caused a laugh at human impotence as he showed how human effort was everywhere effaced. He evoked the shades of Tyre, of Carthage, of Babylon; he commanded Babel and Jerusalem to appear; and among them he sought, but in vain, for the wheel-marks of the chariot of civilization. Humanity floated, he said, on the surface of the world like a ship whose wake is lost on the placid level of the ocean.

Such were the fundamental ideas of the discourse pronounced by Doctor Sigier,—ideas which he wrapped in the mystical phrases and fantastic Latin of the period. The Scriptures, of which he had made a special study, furnished the weapons with which he endeavored to hurry forward the march of his century. He hid his

boldness as it were with a mantle beneath his vast learning, and covered his philosophy with the sanctity of his life. At the close of the address, after bringing his audience face to face with God, after reducing the world to a thought, and almost unveiling the thought of the world, he contemplated for a moment the silent and palpitating audience; then he turned to the stranger and questioned him with a look. Spurred, no doubt, by the presence of that singular being, he added the following words, — here disentangled from the corrupt Latin of the Middle Ages: —

“Where, think you, can God obtain his fructifying truths if not from the bosom of God himself? What am I? The feeble interpreter of a single sentence bequeathed by the first of the apostles, a single saying amid a thousand others of a light as vivid. Before our time Saint Paul hath said: *In Deo vivimus, movemur, et sumus*; in God we live, and move, and have our being. To-day we, with less faith and more knowledge — or less informed and more skeptical — we ask of the apostle: ‘What use is there in that perpetual movement? Where goes the life which moves through zones? Why that intelligence, beginning with the confused perceptions of marble and rising, sphere by sphere, to man, to the angel, and to God? Whence its source? What if life, attaining to God through the worlds, through the stars, through matter and through spirit, were to descend again toward another end?’ Ha! we wish to see the universe on both sides. We are willing to adore the sovereign provided we are allowed to

sit upon his throne for a moment. Fools that we are! we deny to intelligent animals the gift of understanding our thoughts and the object of our actions, we are without pity for the creatures of the spheres beneath us, we drive them from our world, we refuse them the faculty of guessing human thought, and yet we seek to know the loftiest of all ideas, the Idea of the Idea! Then go, seek, rise from globe to globe! fly through space! Thought, Love, and Faith are the keys of mystery. Traverse the spheres, approach the throne! God is of greater clemency than you; he opens his temple to all created things. But forget not the example of Moses. Take your shoes from off your feet before you enter the sanctuary; strip yourself of all that is unclean; abandon your body, or you will be consumed, for God — God is LIGHT.”

As Doctor Sigier with ardent face and hand upraised uttered these glorious words, a ray of sunlight entered through an open casement and flung across the hall, as if by magic, a brilliant fillet, a long, triangular band of gold which wrapped the audience like a scarf. All present accepted this effect of the setting sun as a miracle. A unanimous cry arose, “*Vivat! vivat!*” The sky itself seemed to applaud. Gottfried, full of reverence, looked alternately at the old man and at Doctor Sigier, who were speaking together in low tones.

“Glory to the Master!” said the stranger.

“A fleeting glory!” replied Sigier.

“I would I could perpetuate my gratitude!” returned the old man.

“One line from you,” replied the doctor, “would give me the immortality of earth.”

“Can we give that which we have not?” said the unknown.

Accompanied by the crowd, who, like courtiers around a king, followed their steps at a respectful distance, Gottfried, the old man, and Sigier walked toward the muddy shore, where, in those days, no houses had yet been built, and where the ferryman and his boat were waiting. The doctor and the stranger conversed gravely in some unknown language that was neither Latin nor Gallic. Their hands were sometimes raised to heaven, and anon they pointed to earth. More than once Sigier, to whom the windings of the shore were familiar, guided the old man carefully along the narrow planks thrown like bridges across the mud. The crowd watched them with curiosity, and a few students envied the privilege of the young lad who followed the two sovereigns of speech. The doctor bowed to the stranger as the ferryman pushed off.

At the moment when the boat reached the middle of the stream and rocked upon the current, the sun flamed through the clouds like a conflagration, poured a flood of light upon the fields, colored the various roofs of slate and thatch with its red tones and brown reflections, touched with fire the tall towers of Philip-Augustus, inundated the heavens, dyed the waters, sparkled on the herbage and awakened the insects that were still drowsing. The long flame of light kindled the clouds; it was like the last verse of an evening hymn. All

hearts must have quivered in response, for Nature was sublime. The stranger watched the sight, his eyelids moistened by the semblance of a human tear. Gottfried wept! his trembling hand sought that of the old man who turned to the lad and suffered him to see his emotion; then, as if to save his dignity, compromised by that single tear, he said in a hollow voice:—

“ I mourn my country; I am exiled. Young man, at this hour I left my native land. There, at this hour, the glowworms issued from their fragile dwellings and hung like diamonds on the iris reeds. At this hour, the breeze, softer than sweetest poetry, rose from a valley bathed in light and wafting flowery perfumes. There, on the horizon, I saw the golden city, like Jerusalem the blest, — the city whose name must never pass my lips. There winds a river. That city, with its wondrous buildings, that river, with its ravishing perspectives, its heaven-reflecting currents mingling, parting, interlacing in harmonious strife, rejoicing mine eyes, inspiring love, where are they? At this hour, the waters gathered from the sunset sky fantastic tints and drew capricious pictures. The stars distilled a loving light, the moon laid everywhere her graceful lures; she gave another life to trees, to colors, to forms; varying the charm of glistening waters, of those mute heights, those eloquent structures. The city spoke, she sparkled, she called me back! Columns of smoke were rising beside that glorious tower that shone with whiteness on the breast of night; the lines of the horizon were visible athwart the evening mists, all was

harmony and mystery. Nature refused to say to me farewell; she willed to keep me. Ah! that city was all in all to me; mother, child, wife, glory! The very bells lamented my exile. Oh, marvellous land! beautiful as heaven! Since that hour the universe has been my dungeon. Dear country, why hast thou exiled me!— But I shall triumph!” he cried, flinging forth the words with such a tone of conviction, such a startling ring, that the boatman trembled, fancying he heard the sound of a trumpet.

The old man stood erect in a prophetic attitude, his face toward the south, pointing to his native land across the regions of the sky. The ascetic paleness of his face was replaced by a flush of triumph, his eyes gleamed, he was sublime, like a lion when he erects his mane.

“And thou, poor child!” he said presently, looking down at Gottfried, whose cheeks bore a chaplet of sparkling drops, “thou hast not studied life like me upon a bloody page; why dost thou weep? what hast thou to regret in thy few years?”

“Alas!” answered Gottfried, “I regret a country more beautiful than all the kingdoms of the earth; a country I have never seen, and yet, which I remember. Oh! had I wings to fly through space I would go—”

“Where?” said the Exile.

“ABOVE,” replied the youth.

The stranger trembled at that word; turning his weighty glance upon the lad, he silenced him. But their souls communicated with effusion; they heard

each other's longing in the bosom of that teeming silence, journeying naturally together like two doves winging their way on the same pinion, until the grounding of the boat upon the gravelly shore roused them from their reverie. Then, still buried in their thoughts, they walked in silence to the serjeant's house.

“And so,” said the great stranger to himself, “that poor lad thinks himself an angel exiled from heaven. Who among us has the right to undeceive him? Is it I? I who am so often lifted above this earth by magic power; I who belong to God; I who am to myself a mystery? Have I not seen the most beautiful of all angels living on this base earth? Is the lad either more or less beside himself than I am? Has he taken a bolder step than I into faith? He believes; his belief will doubtless lead him in some luminous path like that in which I walk. Ah! he is beautiful as an angel, but is he not too feeble to bear the cruel struggle?”

Intimidated by the presence of his companion, whose awe-inspiring voice explained to him his own thoughts as the lightning interprets the will of heaven, the youth contented his soul by gazing at the stars with the eyes of a lover. Overwhelmed by a wealth of sensibility too great for his heart to bear, he was feeble and timid, like a gnat paralyzed by the sun. Sigier's words had brought before the minds of both the mysteries of the moral world. The grand old man might clothe them with his own glory, but the youth, though he felt their presence within him, had no power to utter them.

All three expressed, each in his living way, the images of Science, Poetry, and Feeling.

When they reached home the old man shut himself in his room, lit his inspirer,— his lamp, — and gave himself up to the terrible demon of toil, asking words of silence, ideas of the night. Gottfried sat by his window, looking at the moonlight reflected in the water and studying the mystery of the heavens. He yielded himself up to an ecstasy of a kind that was familiar to him ; he passed from sphere to sphere, from vision to vision, listening and believing that he heard the low murmuring of the voice of angels ; seeing, or believing that he saw, divine lights, in the brightness of which he lost his way ever striving to attain a farther point, — the source of all light, the principle of all harmony. Soon the great clamor of Paris, borne along the current of the river, lessened, the lights went out one by one, silence reigned throughout the vast expanse, and the great city slept like a weary giant. Midnight sounded. The slightest noise, the dropping of a leaf, or the flitting of a jackdaw from place to place upon the towers of Notre-Dame, would have recalled the spirit of the exile to earth or that of the youth from the celestial heights to which his soul had risen on the wings of ecstasy.

At this moment the old man heard with horror from the adjoining chamber a moan, followed by the fall of a heavy weight, which the experienced ear of the Exile recognized as that of a human body. He left his room hastily, and entering that of Gottfried, found the lad

stretched on the floor with a long rope fastened to his neck, the other end coiling on the floor. When the old man unfastened the knot, the youth opened his eyes.

“Where am I?” he asked, with an expression of delight.

“At home,” said the old man, examining with surprise Gottfried’s neck and the nail to which the rope had been fastened, which was still at the end of it.

“In heaven,” said the youth in a voice of joy.

“No, on earth,” replied the Exile.

Gottfried rose, walked through the band of light cast by the moon across the room, the casement of which was open, and looked at the shimmering Seine, at the willows and shrubs of the desolate shore. A misty atmosphere lay above the water like a dais of smoke. At the sight, to him so grievous, he crossed his hands upon his breast with a gesture of despair. The old man came to him with amazement on his face.

“Did you mean to kill yourself?” he asked.

“Yes,” answered Gottfried, allowing the stranger to pass his hands about his throat and examine the parts where the rope had pressed.

Except for a few abrasions, the lad had suffered little. The old man concluded that the nail had immediately given way under the weight of the body, and that the fatal attempt had simply ended in a fall of no danger.

“But why, dear child, did you wish to die?”

“Ah!” replied Gottfried, no longer restraining the tears that filled his eyes, “I heard the voice from

heaven. It called me by name. Never before had it named me; but this time it bade me enter heaven! Oh, how sweet the voice was! As I could not spring upward to the skies," he added, with an artless gesture, "I took the only way we have to go to God."

"Oh, child, sublime child!" exclaimed the old man, folding Gottfried in his arms and pressing him to his heart. "Thou art a poet; thou canst ride the storm! Thy poesy is voiceless in thy heart! Thy ardent thoughts, thy keen desires, thy creations live and grow within thy soul. Go thy way, give not thy thoughts, thy creations to the vulgar world; be the altar and the victim and the priest in one! Thou knowest heaven, dost thou not? Hast thou not seen those myriads of white-winged angels with the golden timbrels, moving with steady flight toward the Throne? Hast thou not admired the snowy plumes swaying in unison at the voice of God, like the crests of forests before a storm? Oh, how beautiful is that limitless expanse! tell me, is it not?"

The old man wrung the young man's hand convulsively, and they both gazed upward at the firmament, whence the stars shed rapturous poems which they both could read.

"Oh, to see God!" said Gottfried, softly.

"Child!" said the stranger suddenly, in a stern voice, "hast thou forgotten the sacred instructions of our good master, Doctor Sigier? If we seek, — thou to return to thy celestial home, I to behold once more my earthly country, — must we not obey the voice of God?"

Let us walk, resigned, in the rough paths his powerful finger pointed out to us. Dost thou not shudder at the danger to which thou hast exposed thyself? Entering the Presence without orders, crying 'I am here!' before the time, must thou not perforce have fallen back into a lower world than the one in which thy soul to-day is fluttering? Poor wandering cherub, bless God who has made thee to live in a sphere where thou canst hear the heavenly harmonies! Art thou not pure as the diamond, beautiful as a flower? Think! if, like me, thou knewest naught but the city of woe! Treading its ways, long since my heart wore out. Ah! groping among the tombs for their horrible secrets; wiping the hands crimson with blood; seeing, night after night, those hands stretched out to me imploring pardon which I could not give; studying the convulsions of the murderer and the last cries of his victim; listening to hideous noises and to awful silence, — the silence of the father devouring his sons; analyzing that laugh of souls in hell; seeking some human semblance amid the discolored masses that crime has coiled together and distorted; hearing words that living man cannot hear without dying; ceaselessly evoking the Dead only to arraign them and to judge them; tell me, is that to Live?"

"Stop!" cried Gottfried, "I cannot look at you, I cannot listen to you longer! My mind wanders, my sight grows dim. You light a fire within me which will burn me to ashes."

"But I must continue," replied the old man, waving

his hand with a peculiar motion which affected the youth as it were by a spell.

For a moment the stranger turned his sunken, woful eyes on his companion ; then he pointed with his finger to the earth ; you might have thought that a gulf yawned before them at his command. He stood erect, lighted by the vague, uncertain gleams of the moon, through which his forehead shone resplendent as with a solar brilliancy. At first an expression that was like disdain crossed the gloomy lines of his face, then his look returned to its habitual fixity, which seemed to indicate the presence of some object invisible to the common organs of sight. Of a certainty his eyes beheld the far-off scenes hidden from our eyes by the portals of the tomb. Never perhaps did the man appear so grand, so mighty. An awful struggle convulsed his soul and reacted upon his bodily presence. Powerful as he seemed to be, he bent like the grass of the field beneath the breath of a coming storm. Gottfried stood silent, motionless, magnetized ; an unknown force chained him to the floor ; and, as often happens when our attention is diverted from ourselves, in battle, for instance, or in sight of a conflagration, he no longer felt the presence of his own body.

“ Wilt thou that I reveal to thee the doom toward which thou wert advancing, poor angel of love ? Listen. To me it has been given to see the eternal spaces, the bottomless abysses, where all human creations are swallowed up ; the shoreless sea to which this great

river of men and angels flows. Journeying among the gloomy regions of eternal punishment I was saved from death by the mantle of an Immortal, that vesture of glory granted to genius, — the which whole centuries of men obtain not, — I, poor mortal! But when my way I took through fields of light where congregate the Blessed, the love of a woman, the wings of an angel supported me; borne upon Her heart I could taste the ineffable pleasures whose enjoyment is more dangerous for us mortals than all the anguish of this evil world. Pursuing my pilgrimage across the gloomy regions of the nether world, I passed from sorrow to sorrow, from crime to crime, from punishment to punishment, from cruel silence to heart-rending cries, until I reached the upper gulf which circles Hell. There I saw afar the beacon light of Paradise, shining at illimitable distance. I was in darkness, and yet upon the confines of the Light. I flew, borne onward by my guide, propelled by a power like that which in our dreams transports us into spheres invisible to the bodily eye. The halo which encircled our brows swept the shadows from our path like impalpable dust. Far off, the suns of all the worlds cast forth a light feebler than the glowworms of my native land. I was about to reach the fields of ether where, toward Paradise, masses of light accumulated; the azure depths were soft to cleave; the innumerable worlds sprang forth like flowers in a meadow.

“Turning, I saw upon the last concentric line, where dwelt the phantoms whom I left behind me (like unto griefs we fain would cast away), a Shade. Standing

erect, in eager posture, that soul devoured the spaces with a look; his feet were fastened by the power of God upon the outer edge of that dark circle, where ceaselessly they strained with cruel tension to spring upward, like birds preparing to take flight. It was a man; he did not look at us, he did not hear us. His muscles throbbed and quivered; he seemed to feel at every instant, although he made no step, the weary toil of crossing that infinitude which parted him from Paradise, from the heaven to which his eyes were strained, believing that they saw a cherished form. On that last gate of Hell I read, as on the first, 'All hope must be abandoned.' The wretched soul was crushed by such dire force, I knew not what, that his pains seized my bones and froze me. I turned for succor to my guide, whose presence brought me back to peace and stillness. Like the merlin, whose piercing eye sees or divines the falcon in the air above her, the Shade uttered a cry. We looked where he looked, and beheld as it were a sapphire floating above our heads in the realms of light. The dazzling star descended, rapidly, like a sun-ray when the orb of day rises on the horizon and sends its first beams gliding furtively across the earth.

“THE SPLENDOR came nearer; it increased. Soon I beheld the glorious cloud into whose breast the Angels rise—a brilliant vapor, emanating from their divine substance, lambent, here and there, with tongues of fire. A noble head—the radiance of which I never could have borne without the help of mantle, laurel

wreath, and palm, the attributes of Power my guide possessed — appeared above that cloud, white and pure as snow. It was a light within a light. The quivering wings left dazzling oscillations in the spheres through which he passed as the glance of God passes among the worlds. I beheld the Archangel in his glory! The flower of eternal beauty which adorns the angels of the Spirit shone upon him. In one hand he held a verdant palm, in the other a flaming sword; the palm to decorate the pardoned Shade, the sword to drive Hell backward with a gesture.

“At his approach we inhaled the perfumes of the sky, which fell like dew. In the region where the Archangel dwelt the air took on the colors of opal; it throbbed with the undulations whose impulse came from him. He reached the spot, looked at the Shade, and said: ‘To-morrow!’ Then toward heaven he turned with graceful motion, stretched forth his wings and departed through the spheres, as a vessel, cleaving the waters, withdraws its white sails from the gaze of exiles sorrowing on a desert shore. The Shade uttered intolerable cries, to which the Damned responded, from the lowest deep of that vast cone of suffering worlds up to the more restful circle at the mouth of which I stood. The most poignant of all agonies had appealed to every other! Their wail mingled with the roaring of a sea of fire, — the bass notes of the awful harmony of innumerable millions of suffering souls.

“Suddenly the Shade took wing and flew through the City of Woe down to the depths of hell; then rose as

suddenly, returned, plunged yet again into those bottomless concentric circles; flew round them, hither and thither, like a caged vulture exhausting itself in useless efforts. The Shade had the right to wander thus; he might cross those zones of Hell, glacial, fetid, burning, without undergoing the sufferings there endured; he could glide through that horrible immensity like a ray of sunshine lighting up the gloom. 'God has not inflicted punishment upon him,' said the Master, 'and yet not one of the souls whose tortures thou hast seen would change his doom for the hope beneath whose anguish that Shade succumbs.' As my Master spoke, the Shade returned to his former station near us; brought back by the invincible force which condemned him to stand upon the brink of Hell. My divine guide, guessing my curiosity, touched the hapless being with his palm. The Shade trembled; perhaps his thoughts were measuring the cycles of anguish which lay between that moment and the ever fugitive 'to-morrow.'

"Do you ask to know the meaning of my misery?' he said in a mournful voice. 'Oh, I am glad to tell it. I am *here*, Teresa is *there*; that is the whole of it. On earth we were happy; we were always together. When first I saw my dear Teresa Donati she was ten years old. We loved each other then, without knowing that it was love. Our lives were one life; I trembled with her griefs, I was happy with her joy; together we gave ourselves up to the delights of thinking, of feeling; and so from one another we learned to love. We were married in Cremona. Never did we see each

other's lips without the chaplet of a smile; our eyes glowed ever; our locks were not less blended than our wishes; our heads were as one when reading; always our feet kept unison when we walked. Life was an endless kiss, our home a couch. One morning Teresa grew pale and said to me, "I suffer." And I—I did not suffer! She never rose again. I saw her sweet face change, her golden locks lose color, and yet, I did not die! She smiled, to hide her sufferings from me; but I read them in the azure of her eyes, whose faintest quiver I could so well interpret. "Honorino, I love thee!" she was saying at the moment when her lips grew white; she pressed my hand in hers as death relaxed them. I killed myself; I would not have her lie alone in that sepulchral bed beneath the marble sheets. She is there, above, my Teresa; and I am here! I would not leave her, and God has parted us! why then did he unite us on this earth? He is a jealous God. Paradise is doubtless lovelier since Teresa went there. Do you see her? She is sad amid her happiness, for I am absent! Yes, Paradise must be a desert to her.' 'Master,' I said, weeping, for I thought of my own loves, 'if he desired Paradise for God's sake only would he not be released?' The Father of Poesy gently bowed his head, assenting. Then we passed on, cleaving the air; yet making no more noise than birds which sometimes fly above our heads as we lie prone beneath the shade of trees. It was in vain to try to stop the blasphemy of that most wretched man,—one misery of those angels of darkness being that they cannot see the

light, even when it is all about them. The Shade could not have understood us."

At this instant the hurried tramp of many horses was heard without in the deep silence. The dog barked; the grumbling voice of the sergeant called to him. The riders dismounted, and knocked on the door with a noise that sounded like a sudden explosion. The two exiles, the two poets, fell to earth down the vast heights which separate mankind from heaven. The painful crash of the fall ran like another blood throughout their veins, hissing, and driving in sharp stinging points. Their suffering was in some sort an electric shock.

The heavy and sonorous tramp of an armed man and the iron clanking of his sword, cuirass, and spurs, echoed on the stairs; then a soldier entered the presence of the surprised Exile.

"We can return to Florence," said the man, whose strong voice sounded gentle as he uttered the Italian words.

"What is that thou sayest?" demanded the old man.

"The *Bianchi* triumph."

"Art thou not mistaken?" said the poet.

"No, dear Dante," replied the soldier whose warlike voice expressed the tumult of battle and the joys of victory.

"To Florence! to Florence! O my Florence!" cried DANTE ALLIGHIERI, rising to his feet. Then he looked through air and space, fancied he saw Italy, and became gigantic.

“And I, when shall I go to heaven?” said Gottfried, kneeling before the immortal poet like an angel at the gates of the Sanctuary.

“Come to Florence!” replied Dante in a pitying voice. “My child, when thou seest that adorable landscape from the heights of Fiesole thou wilt think thyself in Paradise.”

The soldier smiled. For the first, for the only time perhaps, the sombre and terrible face of Dante gave forth joy; his eyes, his brow expressed the happiness he so gloriously described in his *Paradiso*. Perhaps he heard the voice of Beatrice. At this instant the light step of a woman and the rustle of a dress was heard through the silence. The dawn was casting upward its first beams. The beautiful Countess Mahaut entered the room and ran to Gottfried.

“Come, my child, my son! at last I may acknowledge thee. Thy birth is recognized; thy rights are protected by the King of France, and thou shalt find a paradise in the heart of thy mother.”

“I hear *the voice*, the voice from heaven!” cried the enraptured child.

The cry aroused the POET; he turned and saw the youth twined in his mother’s arms; then, bidding them farewell with a look, he left his young companion on the maternal breast.

“Let us go!” he cried in a voice of thunder. “Death to the Guelfs!”

BALZAC: A MEMOIR



P. J. David d'Angers

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Bust of Balzac, æt. 44.

By David d'Angers. Now in possession of M. Parent, Paris.

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The daguerreotype given by Balzac to Gavarni is the only picture for which Balzac posed to the sun; it is the only portrait which is not an *interpretation* of him. It has been made the basis of at least two engraved likenesses; one in the "Panthéon des Illustrations Françaises" (1867); the other as the frontispiece of the "Édition Définitive" of his works (1876). In each the portrait has been changed by the addition of a very commonplace suit of clothes; making it certainly more decorous, but far less interesting and valuable. Probably it was originally taken to assist David d'Angers with his bust. The pose and shape of the neck and chin are identical in the two portraits.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A COMPLETE life of Balzac cannot be written at the present time, and possibly never can be. The necessary documents either do not exist or they are not obtainable. Unpublished letters and papers there are, in possession of a compatriot who has done much for the bibliography of his works — the Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul; but even these throw little light on that inner self which Balzac's own will aided by circumstances withdrew, in a measure, from the knowledge of others. There are periods in his life when he disappears. In this there was nothing mysterious. Work was the law of his life; and the total seclusion that he needed for it, the freedom of his solitary days and laborious nights, together with his constant habit of travelling, both in France to study the scenes he pictured, and in foreign countries, kept him out of sight of friends, so that often, for months together, they lost all trace of him.

When he reappears, it is chiefly as he was seen and known by his literary friends and associates in Paris; bearing up against the trials of a hard life with his hearty Tourainean gayety, battling for his rights with

editors and publishers, and letting the reaction from his heavy toil and from the inward stress of his spirit have full swing in the eccentric joviality which was a phase of his nature. This is almost the sole aspect under which the man, taken apart from his work, has been made known to the world. The men who saw him thus, his literary associates, had the ear of the public, and to this day their books and publications, with two or three exceptions, remain, not false perhaps, but misleading, — so misleading that they have concealed the real man and have forced us to look at the feet of the statue, not suffering us to see its head. Unfortunately, they are the text-books from which the present generation of writers and readers derive their ideas of Balzac in his manhood.

Of his childhood and early youth his sister Laure, Madame Surville, has written a charmingly sincere and simple narrative. If read in connection with the parts of Balzac's books which are derived from that period of his life, a sufficient idea of him as child and youth will be obtained by those who will take some pains to study the subject. But Madame Surville pauses on the threshold of his manhood. She gives certain facts of his struggling life, and relates his conduct under them; but to the man himself, the matured spirit, the great soul who has bequeathed to us so rich a legacy, we are left without a guide. Madame Surville says, at the close of her little book, written six years after his death, that the time might come when she would complete her account of his life and show another aspect of his character; but the time, apparently, never came.

The next authentic source of information, his corres-

pondence, throws much invaluable light on his ideas and opinions about his books, and also (in the letters to Madame Hanska) on the closing years of his life; but on the formative years of his early manhood they are, unfortunately, silent. By his own will, apparently, little trace of his real self at that period, or in his middle manhood, remains, except as it may be found in his writings. Of the records left by the contemporaries who knew him, that of Théophile Gautier is incomparably the best. Materialist himself, and seeing Balzac chiefly on his material side, which was very strong and real, he nevertheless has left us almost the only true appreciation of Balzac's spirit shown in the writings of those who came in contact with him. It would seem as though the sincere affection which united them gave him insight, if not intuition.

Scattered among the writings of his associates are a few just estimates of Balzac as a man; but even these are derived from a one-sided knowledge of him. George Sand, with her broad, generous, and loving spirit, knew him personally, and comprehended him in her way. Champfleury saw him at the close of his life for a short time only, but he has made a good portrait of him, and records the fact that having read all which up to that time had been written of Balzac, he found nothing useful or representative.

It is from these various sources, and from two volumes written by contemporaries which have done much to mislead the judgment of the world (those of Léon Gozlan and Edmond Werdet) that all memoirs and studies of Balzac as a man have been derived. In fact, the latter are mostly reproductions of the former, put

into the language of the compilers, and overlaid with fanciful additions (except perhaps M. Gabriel Ferry's "Amies de Balzac"), which often obscure real facts, or put them out of focus.

The sole object of the present volume is to present Balzac to American readers. This memoir is intended to precede the American translations of his work. Translated work is necessarily addressed to those who have not easy access to originals. Bearing this in mind, it has been thought best to go back to the only authentic sources of information and present them in their own words, with such simple elucidations as a close intercourse with Balzac's mind, necessitated by conscientious translation, naturally gives, — an intercourse which cannot be wholly confined to the work of such a mind but, if it exists at all, must reach to the spirit that produced the work.

The reader is asked to remember that this memoir is meant to be a presentation of the man, and not of his work, except as it was a part of himself. The monumental part of that work, *La Comédie Humaine*, is here, with some necessary exceptions, presented to the American public, which will thus have the means of judging for itself.

In giving this volume to the public, sincere thanks are offered to those who have encouraged and promoted it: to M. le Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul for the more than courtesy, the cordial kindness with which he answered inquiries; and to Prof. Edward S. Holden, LL.D., etc., Director of the Lick Observatory, University of California, for his sympathetic and inspiring advice.

CHAPTER II.

HIS SISTER, MADAME SURVILLE'S NARRATIVE.¹

I FEEL it a duty to my brother and to the world to publish certain details which, at the present day, I alone can give, in order that a true and faithful biography may at some future time be written of the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. Balzac's friends have urged me to cut short as soon as possible the legendary tales which never fail to collect around illustrious names, and so prevent the growth of errors which might come in time to be believed, as to my brother's character and the circumstances of his life. I fully understand that it is best for me to tell the facts now, while a goodly number of persons are still living to confirm them.

The *Comédie Humaine* has excited almost as much antagonism as appreciation. Quite recently certain critics have harshly judged it in the name of religion and morality, — two powers which the opponents of all great renowns have ever sought to summon on their side. I believe that never, at any period of French history, has there been a painter of manners and morals

¹ Balzac, sa vie et ses œuvres, d'après sa correspondance, par Mme. L. Surville, née de Balzac. 1 vol. Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1878. The book was first published in 1856.

who has not incurred the reproach of immorality ; but I find it difficult to imagine what sort of literature would be the outcome of the principles such critics are seeking to impose upon writers, if those who profess them were to put them into practice. For instance, would they succeed in proving that Balzac was mistaken in his belief that the novel of social life and morals cannot avoid the contrasts of light and shade, and that mankind cannot be rightly instructed by the picture of their virtues only?

I have neither the power nor the desire to argue against such judgments ; I am not seeking in these pages to defend my brother. Time, which has laid its chrism upon many a genius insulted and rejected in its day, will assign him his place in the literature of his country. On that judge, who alone is impartial and infallible, we must rely.

My brother was born at Tours, May 16, 1799, Saint-Honoré's day. The name pleased my father, and though it had no precedent in either line of the family, he gave it to his son. My mother had lost her first child by endeavoring to nurse it herself. A wet-nurse for little Honoré was therefore chosen, who lived just outside the gates of the town in an airy house surrounded by gardens. My father and mother were so satisfied with this woman that they put me with her and left my brother in her care after he was weaned. He was nearly four years old when we returned together to our father's house.

Honoré's fine health saved our mother from those latent anxieties which commonly find expression in tender solicitude and the indulgences which spoil a child,

but are so dear to it. In those days children did not play the important part now assigned to them in many families. They were not brought into notice ; they were kept children ; and, above all, they were trained in respect and obedience to their parents. Our governess, Mademoiselle Delahaye, may have had too much zeal in this direction, for it is certain that, with respect and obedience, she also inspired us with fear. My brother long remembered the small terrors that beset us when she took us to bid good-morning to our mother, or when we entered the latter's presence to wish her good-night. To us these were solemn ceremonies, though repeated daily. It is true that by certain signs, previously agreed upon with Mademoiselle, our mother saw (on our faces, she said) the traces of our misdeeds which drew down upon us her stern displeasure, for she alone had the right to punish or reward us. The result was that Honoré was neither petted nor transformed into a prodigy at an age when a child understands its parent's love only through smiles and kisses. If he showed at an early age any sign of the qualities which were destined to make him famous no one remarked it, and no one has since recalled it. He was a charming child ; his joyous temper, his smiling, well-cut lips, his great brown eyes, both soft and brilliant, his high forehead, and his wealth of black hair made him an object of admiration when we were taken to walk in the public promenades.

Family surroundings react so powerfully on the characters of children, and exert such influence on their fate that some account of our parents seems to me quite necessary. It will, moreover, serve to explain

the first events of my brother's youth. Our father, born in Languedoc in 1746, was advocate of the Council under Louis XVI. His profession led him into relations with the notabilities of that time, and with the men whom the Revolution brought to the surface and made famous. These affiliations enabled him in 1793 to save more than one of his old friends and former protectors. Such services exposed him to some danger, and a very influential Conventional, who felt an interest in *citizen Balzac*, hastened to remove him from the sight and memory of Robespierre by sending him to the North to organize a commissariat for the army. Thrown thus by chance into the War department, my father remained in it, and was in charge of the commissariat of the Twenty-second Military Division when he married, in 1797, the daughter of one of his superiors, then director of the Paris hospitals. Subsequently, he lived nineteen years in Tours, where he bought a house and some landed property in the vicinity of the town. At the end of ten years it was proposed to appoint him mayor, but he declined the honor, not wishing to give up the management of a large hospital which he had taken upon himself. He feared he should not find time to properly fulfil these triple functions.

My father was a mixture of Montaigne, Rabelais, and my uncle Toby in his philosophy, his originality, and his goodness of heart; and he had, like my uncle Toby, a predominant idea. That idea was *health*. He managed his life with the view of living as long as possible. He calculated, from the number of years required to bring a man to perfect maturity, that his life ought to last one hundred years and more; to attain

that *more* he took the most extraordinary care of himself, and was constantly on the watch to maintain what he called the "equilibrium of the vital forces." And a mighty labor it was, truly! His fatherly solicitude still further increased this desire for longevity. When forty-five years of age, not having married, and not expecting to do so, he had put the bulk of his property into life annuities, half on the Grand-livre [the Public Funds], half with Lafarge's bank, then just established, he being one of its largest shareholders. When he died in 1829, at the age of eighty-three, from the effects of an accident, he was receiving an income of twelve thousand francs from this source. The reduction of interest, and the waste which took place in the administration of the Tontine diminished his immediate revenues, but his green old age seemed to justify his hope of sharing with the State the immense capital of the Tontine by the extinction of all the other shareholders of his class, — a result which might have repaired the wrong he did to his family by the investment. This hope had passed into a conviction with him, and he was constantly urging his family to preserve their health so that they might enjoy the millions he should leave them. This conviction, which we all shared, made him happy and consoled him under the reverses which overtook him at the close of his life. "No matter, Lafarge will put everything right," he used to say.

His originality, which became proverbial at Tours, was quite as marked in his talk as in his actions; he said and did nothing like other people; Hoffmann might have used him as a type for one of his creations. My father was wont to scoff at other men who, as he declared,

were toiling incessantly for their own misfortunes. He could not meet a poor sickly or deformed being without railing at the parents, and, above all, at the rulers who did not give as much care to the preservation of the human race as they did to that of animals; and he held certain singular theories on this debatable subject, which he propounded in a manner no less singular. "But why give them to the world?" he used to say, walking up and down the room in his wadded gown of puce-colored silk, his chin buried in a huge cravat cherished from the days of the Directory. "They would call me an 'original'" (a term which greatly angered him), "and there would n't be one poor rickety being the less. Has any philosopher, except Cervantes, who gave the death-blow to knight-errantry, ever been able to correct humanity? — that palsied being, always young always old, which keeps alive somehow — happily for us and our successors," he would add, with a laugh.

But he never scoffed at humanity unless he was unable to succor it, as he proved on many occasions. Epidemics broke out in the hospital, especially after the return of the soldiers from Spain; at such times my father took up his abode in the hospital building, and forgetting his own health to watch over that of others, he displayed a zeal which in him was devotion. He put down many abuses without fearing the enmities that sort of courage invites; and he introduced great and beneficent improvements, such, for instance, as work-shops for the old men, for whom he obtained wages.

His memory, his spirit of observation, and his gift of repartee were not less remarkable than his originality.

He remembered after an interval of twenty years the exact words that were said to him. At seventy years of age, meeting unexpectedly a friend of his childhood, he spoke to him, without the least hesitation, in the dialect of their province, though he had not returned there since he left it at fourteen. His keen observation enabled him more than once to predict the success or failure of men whom the world appreciated far otherwise than as he judged them; time often proved the justice of his prophecy. As for his repartees, they never failed him under any circumstances. I remember that some one read aloud an article on a centenarian (not allowed, as will readily be imagined, to pass in silence), and my father, against his usual custom, interrupted the reader to exclaim enthusiastically, "He lived wisely, and did not squander his health in excesses, like the imprudent youth of the present day." It turned out, however, that this wise man was in the habit of getting drunk, and (this in my father's eyes was an enormity against health) ate a supper every night. "Well," he said, without a sign of discomposure, "he shortened his life, that's all."

When Honoré was of an age to understand and appreciate his father the latter was a fine old man still full of energy, with courteous manners, speaking seldom, and rarely of himself, indulgent to youth, with which he was in sympathy, leaving to all the liberty he demanded for himself, possessed of a sound and upright judgment, in spite of his eccentricities, and a temper so equable, a character so kind that he made his home happy to all about him. His fine education enabled him to follow with delight the advance of science and

of social amelioration, the future of which he foresaw from the start. His wise remarks and his many curious anecdotes helped his son greatly to a knowledge of life, and supplied him with the subject of more than one of his books.

My mother, who was rich and beautiful and very much younger than her husband, had a rare vivacity of mind and imagination, an unwearying activity, great firmness of decision, and boundless devotion to her family. Her love for her children brooded over them, but she expressed it more by actions than by words. Her whole life proved her love; she forgot herself for us, and this self-forgetfulness brought misfortunes upon her which she bore courageously. Her last and bitterest trial was to survive, at the age of seventy, her glorious son, and to succor him in his last moments; she prayed beside his dying bed, supported by that religious faith which enabled her to exchange her earthly hopes for those of heaven.

Those who knew my father and my mother will confirm the truth of these brief sketches. The qualities of the author of the *Comédie Humaine* are undoubtedly the logical result of those of our parents; from our father he derived his originality, memory, spirit of observation, and judgment; from our mother, his activity and imagination; and from both, his energy and kindheartedness.

Honoré was the eldest among two sisters and two brothers. Our sister, Laurence, died a young woman after five years of married life. Our brother, Henry, went to the colonies, where he married and settled. At Honoré's birth all things combined to promise him

a fine future. Our mother's fortune, that of our maternal grandmother, who lived with her daughter from the time she became a widow, the salary and the annuities of our father made a handsome income for the family. My mother devoted herself wholly to the education of her children, and thought herself obliged to treat them with severity to neutralize the effects of the indulgence shown to us by our father and grandmother. This severity repressed the tender feelings of little Honoré, who, was also reserved and shy in presence of his father's age and gravity. This state of things was profitable to fraternal affection, which was certainly the first feeling to bud and blossom in his heart. I was only two years younger than Honoré, and in the same situation as he towards our parents. Brought up together in our nurse's home we loved each other tenderly. My recollections of his tenderness date far back. I have not forgotten the headlong rapidity with which he ran to save me from tumbling down the three high steps without a railing which led from our nurse's room to the garden. His loving protection continued after we returned to our father's house, where more than once he allowed himself to be punished for my faults without betraying me. Once, when I came upon the scene in time to accuse myself of the wrong, he said: "Don't acknowledge next time; I like to be punished for you." Such pure and artless devotion is never forgotten. Our affection was fostered still farther by propitious circumstances. We lived together, then and later, in a confidence and close intimacy which had no limits. Throughout his life I knew my brother's joys and troubles, and I had, at all times, the precious

privilege of consoling him : that certainty is now my joy.

The greatest event of his childhood was a journey to Paris, where my mother took him in 1804, to show him to his grandparents. They were delighted with their pretty little grandson, and showered him with gifts and kisses. Little accustomed to such petting, Honoré returned to Tours with his head full of joyous memories and his heart filled with love for those dear grandparents, about whom he talked to me incessantly, describing them as best he could, also their house, their beautiful garden, not forgetting Mouche, the big watchdog, with whom he had struck up an intimacy. This visit to Paris gave food to his imagination for a long time. Our grandmother was fond of relating his sayings and doings on this occasion, especially the following. One evening she had sent for a magic-lantern. Honoré, not seeing his friend Mouche among the audience, jumped up, calling out in a tone of authority : " Stop ! stop ! " (Probably he felt himself master in his grandfather's house.) Then he left the room and presently returned, dragging the dog, to whom he said : " Sit you there, Mouche, and look at the show ; it won't cost you anything, for grandpapa pays."

Some months after this trip Honoré's brown silk jacket and handsome blue belt were changed for mourning garments. His dear grandpapa was dead, struck down by apoplexy. It was the child's first grief ; he wept bitterly when told that he would never again see his grandfather, and the recollection of the kind old man remained so present to his mind that on one occasion, long after the sad event, seeing me go off

into a wild burst of laughter while my mother was reprimanding me, he endeavored to put a stop to such tempestuous gaycty, which threatened serious consequences, by putting his lips to my ear and saying in tragic tones :—

“ Think on the death of your grandpapa ! ”

Ineffectual succor, alas ! as I had never seen my grandpapa, and knew nothing as yet of death.

Thus the only words that we can recall of Honoré’s first years showed kindness of heart rather than intelligence. I remember, however, that he did show imagination in some of those childish games which George Sand has so well described in her *Memoirs*. My brother improvised little comedies, which amused us (not always the case with greater ones). For hours together he would twang the strings of a little red violin, while his radiant face expressed the belief that he was making melody ; consequently, he was much surprised when I entreated him to stop a noise which might have set his friend *Mouche* to howling. “ Don’t you hear how pretty it is ? ” he would say. Like other children, he read with eager interest all those fairy-tales in which catastrophes, more or less dramatic, made him cry. Perhaps they inspired him with other tales, for sometimes to his usual bewildering loquacity there succeeded long periods of silence which were attributed to fatigue, but which may really have been reveries carrying him, even then, to imaginary worlds.

When he was seven years of age he was taken from the day school at *Tours* and sent to the seminary at *Vendôme*, then very celebrated. We went to see him regularly at *Easter* of every year, and also on the

days when prizes were distributed ; but he was seldom crowned ; reproaches were more plentiful than praises for him on those great days which he awaited so impatiently, and out of which he expected such delight. He remained seven years at this school, and during that time he had no holidays. The memory of those days inspired him with the first part of *Louis Lambert*. In that part he and Louis Lambert are one ; it is Balzac in two persons. The school routine, the small events of his daily life, what he suffered and what he thought, all is true ; even the Treatise on the Will which one of the professors (whom he names) burned without reading in his anger at finding it in place of a theme which he had ordered the boy to do. My brother always regretted the loss of that paper, regarding it as a proof of his intellect at that period.

He was fourteen years of age when Monsieur Mareschal, the head of the school, wrote to our mother, between Easter and the prize-giving, to come at once and remove her son. He was attacked with a sort of coma, which was all the more alarming to his masters because they saw no cause for it. My brother was to them an idle scholar ; they could not, therefore, attribute this peculiar affection of the brain to intellectual fatigue. Honoré, who had become thin and puny, was like a somnambulist sleeping with open eyes ; he heard scarcely any of the questions that were addressed to him, and could not reply when asked abruptly, "What are you thinking of?" "Where are you?" This extraordinary state, which in after years he fully understood, came from a sort of congestion of ideas (to use his own expression). He had read, unknown

to his masters, the greater part of the rich library of the college, which had been formed by the learned Oratorian founders and proprietors of this vast institution, where more than three hundred lads were educated at a time. It was in the punishment cells, to which he was sent almost daily, that he devoured these serious books, which developed his mind at the expense of his body at an age when the physical powers should be exercised at least as much as the intellectual. No one in the family has ever forgotten the amazement caused by Honoré's appearance when his mother brought him back from Vendôme.

"See how a college returns to us the blooming children we trust to it!" said our grandmother, mournfully.

My father, at first very anxious at the state of his son, was soon reassured when he saw that the change of scene, the fine air and the beneficent effect of home life sufficed to restore the liveliness and gayety of the lad in the adolescent period which was just beginning for him. Little by little the classification of ideas took place in his vast memory, where he already registered the beings and the events which were about him; these recollections were put to use later in his pictures of provincial life. Impelled by a vocation of which, as yet, he knew nothing, he was instinctively led to books and to observations which prepared the way for his future toil and made it fruitful; he amassed materials without knowing the use to which they were destined. Certain types in the *Comédie Humaine* belong undoubtedly to this period.

In the long walks which our mother made him take,

he already admired with an artist's eye the tender scenery of his dear Touraine which afterwards he described so well. He would sometimes stop short with enthusiasm before those glorious sunsets which illumine with such picturesque effects the gothic steeples of Tours, the scattered villages on the hill-slopes, and that beautiful Loire, always so majestic and covered with sails of every size and shape. But our mother, more solicitous about his exercise than his reveries, obliged him to fly the kite of our little brother, or to run with my sister and me. He would then forget all about the landscape, and be the youngest and the gayest of the four children who surrounded their mother. But it was not so in the cathedral of Saint-Gatien, to which she took us regularly on fête-days. There, Honoré might dream at his leisure, and nought of the poetry and the splendor of that noble church was lost upon him. He noticed all, — from the marvellous effects of light produced by the old stained windows, and the mists of incense enveloping, as with a veil, the officiating priests, to the pomps of the divine service, rendered all the more imposing by the presence of the cardinal-archbishop. The countenances of the priests, which he studied daily, enabled him later to describe the abbés Birotteau and Lorau, and the curé Bonnet, whose tranquillity of soul forms so fine a contrast to the agitations of remorse which torture the repentant Véronique.¹ This church had made so great an impression on him that the mere name of Saint-Gatien awakened a world of memories in which the fresh and pure sensations of early youth, and the religious feelings which never left

¹ In the *Curé de Village*.

him throughout his life, were mingled with the ideas of manhood already germinating in that powerful brain.

He attended the lectures of the college course, and studied under his father's roof with tutors. Already he began to say that the world would talk of him some day; a speech that made us laugh, and which became the text for endless witticisms. In the name of his future fame we made him submit to innumerable little tortures, preludes to the greater tortures he was to bear as the cost of his acquired glory. This youthful apprenticeship was far from useless. He accepted all such teasing with a heartier laugh than ours, (he was always laughing in those most happy days). Never was a nature more amiable than his, and yet never did any one develop so young the desire and the intuitive expectation of fame.

But we were far from increasing or encouraging this desire. My brother, who was, as I have already said, somewhat repressed by awe, thought much more than he ever said in presence of his father and mother. They, of course, being unable to judge him from a full knowledge of what he was, regarded him, like his masters, as an ordinary boy who had to be prodded and forced to do his lessons in Greek and Latin. Our mother, who more particularly took the management of him, had so little suspicion of what her elder son already was that she attributed to accident the sagacious remarks and observations which sometimes escaped him. "You certainly cannot know what you are talking about, Honoré," she would say to him. He, for all answer, would look at her with the sagacious, or the quizzical, or the kindly smile with which nature had

endowed him. This mute and yet eloquent protest was called impertinence if our mother chanced to see it; for Honoré, not daring to argue with her, was unable to explain either his thoughts or his smile. The repression which our elders exercise over genius, the injustices which wound it, the obstacles that are put in its way, may possibly double its strength and give more vigor to its wing. At any rate, one likes to think so.

At the close of the year 1814 my father was summoned to Paris and placed in charge of the commissariat of the First division of the army. Honoré finished his studies with Monsieur Lepitre, rue Saint Louis, and with MM. Sganzer and Beuzelin, rue de Thorigny in the Marais, where we lived. He was not more thought of in those institutions than he had been at Vendôme. While doing his exercises in Rhetoric he first became attracted to the beauty of the French language. I have preserved one of his competitive compositions (a speech of the wife of Brutus to her husband after the condemnation of her sons). The anguish of the mother is given with great force, and my brother's all-powerful faculty of entering into the souls of his personages is already noticeable.

His studies over, Honoré returned for the third time to his father's house. This was in 1816. He was then a handsome youth, seventeen and a half years old, full of health and vigor; no study tired him; a smile was always on his lips; he was indeed a fine young lad, the very personification of happiness. My mother regarded work as the basis of all education, and she thoroughly understood the business of employing time. Consequently she did not allow her son one idle moment. He received

House at Tours in which Balzac was born.

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lessons in all those sciences which had been neglected in his schools, and he attended the lectures at the Sorbonne. I still remember the enthusiasm he felt at the eloquent extempore speeches of such men as Villemain, Guizot, Cousin, and others. Glowing with interest, he would repeat them, trying to associate us in these joys and enable us to comprehend them. He would rush to the public libraries to study books and so prepare himself to profit more by the teachings of those illustrious professors. During his peregrinations through the Latin quarter he bought, from the book-stalls along the quays, many rare and precious books which he had learned how to choose. They were the nucleus of that fine library which his constant relations with publishers in after days enabled him to render so complete, — a library which he wished to bequeath to his native town, until the indifference shown to him by his townsmen whenever he returned to Tours wounded him so deeply that he resigned this intention.

Monsieur Brun, the present prefect of the Indre-et-Loire, a former schoolmate of Honoré at Vendôme, has lately, in conjunction with the mayor, Monsieur Mame, brother of the celebrated publisher who brought out Balzac's first works, placed an inscription on the house where the author of the *Comédie Humaine* was born. This is not the house, however, in which he passed his childhood. My father's residence now belongs to Madame la Comtesse d'Outremont, a friend of our family. It was formerly numbered 29 in the long street which divides the town and crosses it from the bridge to the Avenue de Grammont. The relations and friends of Balzac would have been greatly astonished in 1817, and

even later, to have been told that he would one day merit this honor paid to his memory, and still more amazed had the announcement been made to them that the street in Paris in which he died was to bear his name, and that a noble procession of great men would follow him to his last resting-place. They would not have known how to reply to such prophecies, for, in spite of the vivacious mind which was beginning to make itself felt in Honoré, no one believed as yet in his intellect. It is true that he chattered a great deal, amused himself with nonsense like a child, and showed a good-humor and at times a guilelessness which often made him our butt. Still, we might have observed at the time, had we paid attention to it, the attraction which he felt to thoughtful minds and solid conversations. Above all he liked to listen to an old friend of our grandmother, Mademoiselle de R——, who had been intimately connected with Beaumarchais, and who lived in the same house that we lived in. My brother loved to make her talk of that celebrated man until, thanks to her details, he knew Beaumarchais's life so well that he might have furnished the materials for the fine biography that Monsieur de Loménie has lately published.

My father wished his son to study law, pass through all the examinations, and spend three years in a lawyer's and in a notary's office, so as to learn the details of legal procedure together with the form and terms of deeds. A man's education was not complete, according to my father's ideas, if he did not have a knowledge of ancient and modern legislation, and, above all, of the laws of his own country. Honoré

therefore entered the law office of Monsieur de Merville, a friend of ours. Monsieur Scribe had just left it. After eighteen months spent in this office he was received into that of Monsieur Passez, notary, where he remained for the same length of time. Monsieur Passez lived in the same house with us, and was also one of our intimates. These circumstances will explain the fidelity of the descriptions of legal offices which is so observable in the *Comédie Humaine*, and the profound legal knowledge therein revealed. I once found a copy of *César Birotteau* among the legal works of a Parisian barrister, and he told me that the work was an excellent one to consult in the matter of bankruptcy.

My brother led a busy life during these years; for, independently of the time spent in these offices and on the work given him to do by his masters, he had also to prepare himself for successive examinations. But his activity, his memory, and his natural faculty were such that he often found time to finish his evenings with a game of whist or boston with my grandmother, at which the kind and gentle old lady would contrive, by some voluntary imprudence or inattention, to let him win her money, which he devoted to the purchase of his books. He always loved those games in memory of her; and the recollection of her sayings and of her gestures used to come to him like a happiness which, as he said, he wrested from a tomb.

Occasionally Honoré accompanied us to a ball; but having unfortunately slipped and fallen, in spite of the lessons he had taken from the Opera dancing-master, he renounced the practice of dancing, so much did the

smiles of the women who saw him fall rankle in his mind ; and he vowed then to master society in some better way than by the graces and talents of a drawing-room ; from that time forth he was a spectator only in festal scenes which, later in life, he utilized in his books.

At twenty-one he had ended his legal studies and passed all his examinations. My father now confided to him the plans he had made for his future, which would undoubtedly have led him to wealth ; but wealth was then the least of Honoré's desires. My father had formerly protected a man whom he met again in 1814 as a notary in Paris. The latter, being very grateful and desirous of returning to the son the service he had received from the father, offered to take Honoré into his office and leave him his practice at the end of a few years. My father's security for part of the expenses, a prosperous marriage, and certain regular advances from the splendid income of the practice would have cleared the position of incumbrance in a very few years.

But imagine Balzac bending, for ten years perhaps, over deeds of sale, marriage contracts, inventories, — he who was now aspiring secretly to literary fame ! His stupefaction was great when the plan was divulged to him. But he openly stated his wishes, and then it was our father's turn to be stupefied. A lively discussion followed. Honoré eloquently combated the powerful reasons given to him ; and his looks, words, and tones revealed so genuine a vocation that my father granted him two years in which to give proofs of his talent. This fine legal chance thus thrown away explains the severity with which he was afterwards treated, and

also the hatred which he always felt to the notarial profession, — a hatred which may be noticed in several of his books.

My father did not yield to Honoré's wishes without regrets, which vexatious events increased. He had just been retired from active service, and he had lost money in two enterprises. In short, we went to live in a country house which he had lately bought at Villeparisis, about sixteen miles from Paris. Fathers of families will understand the uneasiness of our parents under these circumstances. My brother had given no proof of literary talent, and he had his way to make; it was, therefore, reasonable to desire a less doubtful career for him than that of literature. For one vocation like that which Honoré declared he felt (and which he did indeed justify so grandly) how many mediocrities have been suffered to drift into hopeless careers by such indulgence! Consequently, this yielding of my father to his son's wishes was regarded as a weakness and generally blamed by the friends who took an interest in our welfare. "He was allowing Honoré to waste the most precious years of his life. Did the career of a literary man ever, under any circumstances, lead to fortune? Had Honoré the makings of a man of genius? They doubted it." What would these friends have said of my father's weakness if he had told them of the offer that had been made to him and refused?

One intimate friend who was somewhat brusque and very dictatorial declared that in his opinion Honoré was only good for a copying-clerk. The poor fellow wrote *a good hand*, to quote the expression of a writing-master who had taught him after leaving Vendôme.

“If I were in your place,” added this friend, “I should not hesitate to put Honoré in some government clerkship, where, with your influence, he will soon manage to support himself.” My father, however, judged his son differently at this time; and (his theories aiding) he believed in the intellect of his children. He contented himself with smiling at such advice, holding firm all the while to his own way. It is to be presumed that his friends left him that evening deploring to each other his paternal blindness.

My mother, less confiding than her husband, thought that a little hardship would soon bring Honoré to submission. She therefore installed him, just before we moved from Paris, in a small attic room, chosen by him for its nearness to the Bibliothèque de l’Arséna], the only library unknown to him, and where he now proposed to work. She furnished this room with the strict necessities of a bed, table, and a few chairs; the allowance which she made to her son for his living would certainly not have sufficed for his bare wants if she had not left behind her in Paris an old woman, for many years attached to our service, whom she charged to keep an eye upon him. It was this woman whom he calls Iris in his letters.¹

To pass suddenly from a comfortable home, where everything was abundant, to the solitude of a garret, where all comfort was lacking to him, was surely a hard transition. But Honoré made no complaint of this lodging, where, in truth, he found freedom, and to which he carried the glorious hopes which his first literary disappointments were unable to extinguish. It

¹ This attic room was in the house No. 9 rue Lesdiguières,

was then that his correspondence with me began, — a correspondence tenderly preserved, and now so full of dear and precious memories. I ask indulgence for the familiar playfulness of the first few extracts which I now quote. That very familiarity is their natural plea for it. I cannot suppress them, for they picture in a striking way the rudiments of my brother's character; and I believe that the gradual development of such a mind is interesting to follow. In his first letter, after enumerating the costs of moving (items which had no other purpose than to show our mother he was already short of money) he confides to me that he has taken a servant.

“PARIS, April 12, 1819.

“‘A servant, brother! — what are you thinking of!’

“‘Yes, a servant; with a name as queer as that of Dr. Nacquart's servant. His was called Tranquil; mine is named Myself. And a bad bargain he is, truly! Myself is lazy, clumsy, thoughtless. His master is hungry or thirsty, and often enough he has neither bread nor water to give him; he does n't even know how to shield him from the wind, which whistles through the door and window, like Tulou in his flute — but less agreeably. As soon as I am awake I ring for Myself and he makes my bed. Then he sweeps the room, and clumsy he is at it.

“‘Myself!’

“‘Yes, sir.’

“‘Look at that cobweb with the big fly buzzing in it till I'm half giddy with the noise — and the fluff under the bed — and the dust on the window-panes which blinds me.’

“The lazy beggar gazes at me and does n’t stir, and yet, in spite of all his defects, I can’t get rid of that unintelligent Myself. . . .

“Don’t be surprised that I write on half a sheet of paper, with a bad pen, and that I talk nonsense. I must be careful of my expenditures, and I economize everywhere, in writing and in mind, as you see.”

In his second letter he excuses the first, which our mother had thought too careless.

“Tell mamma I work so hard that writing to you is recreation, for then I go — saving your dignity and my own — like Sancho’s ass browsing on anything I get hold of. No, I won’t make rough copies — for shame! the heart knows nothing of rough copies. If I don’t punctuate, and if I don’t read over what I have written, it is that you may have to read and reread it, and think of me a long time. There! I’ll fling my pen to the geese if that is n’t a refinement of sentiment worthy of a woman. . . .

“Let me tell you, mademoiselle, that economy reigns here for the purpose of buying a piano; when my mother brings you to see me you will find one. I have taken all dimensions; by setting back the walls a piano can be got in. If my landlord objects to the expense I shall add it to the cost of the piano, and Rousseau’s *Dream* [a piece by Cramer then much in vogue] shall echo in my garret, where a need of dreams makes itself felt.”

What work he meditates! novels, comedies, comic operas, tragedies are all upon his list of things to be done. He is like a child with so many words to say he

does not know where to begin. First, it is *Stella* and *Cogsigrué*, two books that never saw the light. Of his projected comedies I remember only *Les Deux Philosophes*, which he would certainly have taken up again in after years had he lived. The pair scoffed at each other and quarrelled incessantly (like friends, Honoré said, when relating the plot). These philosophers while despising the vanities of the world struggled with each other to obtain them; and their failure to do so finally reconciled them to each other, by causing both to curse the odious selfishness of the human race. For which of these works could it have been that he so urgently wanted our father's Tacitus, a work that was lacking to the library of the Arsenal? This want was the subject of his next letter.

“ I positively must have father's Tacitus; he can't want it now that he is so full of China and the Bible.”

My father, a great admirer of the Chinese (perhaps because of their longevity as a nation), was at this time reading those thick volumes of the Jesuit missionaries who were the first to describe China. He was also engaged in making notes to a precious edition which he possessed of the Bible, a book which at all times called forth his admiration.

“ June, 1819.

“ You can easily find out where the key of the library is kept. Papa is not always at home; he does go to walk; and miller Godard is at hand to bring me Tacitus.

“ By the bye, *Cogsigrué* is beyond my powers, as yet. I must ruminare over it and take time before writing.

“ My dear, I don't like your historical studies and your

maps of the centuries. Why do you 'amuse' yourself (what a word to use!) in rewriting Blair? Get him out of the library — you will find him close to Tacitus — and learn him by heart. But what good will that do you? A girl knows enough history when she does n't jumble up Hannibal with Cæsar, and does n't take Thrasymene for a general, or Pharsalia for a Roman matron. Read Plutarch and books of that calibre, and you will be freighted for life without losing any of your delightful claims to womanhood. You don't want to be a *femme savante*, fie!

"I dreamed deliciously last night; I was reading the Tacitus you sent me.

"Talma is playing Auguste in Cinna. I am terribly afraid I can't resist going to see him — madness! my very stomach trembles. . . . My household news is disastrous; toil interferes with cleanliness. That rascal of a Myself neglects me more than ever. He won't go down oftener than every third or fourth day to make my purchases, and then to the nearest and worst dealers in the neighborhood; the others are too far off, and the fellow economizes in steps. And so it is that your brother (destined to fame) is already fed like a great man, — that is to say, he is dying of hunger.

"Another malign fact: coffee makes a terrible mess upon the floor; much water is necessary to repair damages; now as water does not rise naturally to my celestial regions (it comes down upon them in stormy days), it will be necessary, after buying the piano, to obtain the services of an hydraulic machine to wash up the coffee while master and valet are gaping after fame. When you send Tacitus don't forget the coverlet; and

if you could add an old, a very old shawl, it would be useful to me. Are you laughing? It is the one thing wanting to my nocturnal garb. 'I had to think first of my legs, where I suffer most with cold; those I wrap in the Tourainean top-coat which Grogniart, of bungling memory, constructed. [Grogniart was a little tailor at Tours, who used to make over the clothes of the father for the son, not at all to the satisfaction of Honoré.] The said top-coat coming only to my middle, the upper half of me is ill-protected from the frost, which has only the roof and a flannel waistcoat to get through before reaching my brotherly skin, too tender, alas, to bear it,—in short, the cold *nips* me. As to my head, I am counting on a Dantesque cap, which shall enable it to brave the blast of door and window. Thus equipped, I shall inhabit my palace in much comfort. . . .

“I finish this letter as Cato finished his discourse; he said ‘Let Carthage be destroyed.’ I say ‘Let Tacitus be taken;’ and I shall be, dear student of history, of your four feet eight inches, the very humble servant.”

Here follows a letter which I give entire; prefacing it with a few remarks to make it intelligible. My father, wishing to spare his son the mortifications of self-love in case he failed in his new career, gave out, among our friends, that he was absent in the country. Monsieur de Villers, of whom Honoré speaks in the following letter, was an old friend of the family, a former priest and Comte de Lyon, living at Nogent, a little village near the Isle-Adam. My brother had stayed with him several times. The witty conver-

sation of the good old man, his curious anecdotes about the old Court, where he had been a favorite, the encouragement he gave to Honoré, who made him his confidant, had given rise to so true an affection between them that in later days Honoré used to speak of Isle-Adam as his "paradise of inspiration."

"November, 1819.

"You ask for news. I shall have to manufacture it; no one sets foot in my garret. I can only tell you a lot of items about myself; for instance: A fire broke out rue Lesdiguières, No. 9, in the head of a poor lad, and no engines have been able to put it out. It was kindled by a beautiful woman whom he does not know. They say she lives at the Quatre-Nations, the other side of the Pont des Arts; she is called Fame. Unfortunately the burned youth reasons; he says to himself: 'Either I have or I have not genius; in either case I am laying up a store of sorrows. Without genius, I am done for. I must then pass my life in feeling desires I cannot satisfy, in miserable envy, cruel pain. With genius, I shall be persecuted, calumniated; and I know very well that Mademoiselle Fame will have to wipe away abundant tears.

"There is still time to make myself a nonentity, and to become like M——, who calmly judges others without knowing them, takes the opinions of politicians without understanding them, wins at cards, lucky man, though he wastes his trumps, and who will one day be a deputy, because he is rich, — a perfect man! If I were to win fives in a lottery to-morrow I should be as successful as he, no matter what else I could say or do.

But not having the money to buy his hopes, I have not his wonderful opportunity to impose on fools! Poor, pitiful humanity!

“Let’s talk of my pleasures. Yesterday I played a game of boston with my landlord, and after piling up *misères* and *piccolos*, and having the luck of fools (perhaps I was thinking of M——), I won — three sous! Mamma will say: ‘Dear, dear! Honoré will be a gambler.’ Not at all, mother, I keep watch over my passions.

“I have been thinking that after the laborious winter I am about to go through, a few days in the country would do me good. No, mamma; it is not because I am sick of my hardships — I love them. But some one close at your elbow will tell you that exercise and fresh air are very good for the health of man. Now, as Honoré is not allowed to show himself in his father’s house why should n’t he go to that kind Monsieur Vilers, who loves and encourages the poor rebel? An idea, mother! Suppose you write and propose the trip? There, now it is as good as done; you need n’t put on your stern look, for we all know you are kind at heart, and we only half fear you.

“When are you coming to see me?—to drink my coffee and eat scrambled eggs, stirred up in a dish you must bring with you; for if I succumb and go to see Cinna, I shall have to renounce household utensils, and perhaps even the piano and the hydraulic ram.

“Iris, the goddess messenger, has not arrived.¹ I will finish this letter to-morrow.

¹ This was the old woman deputed by his mother to keep an eye upon his wants.

“*To-morrow.* Still no Iris. Can she be misconducting herself? [She was seventy years old.] I never see her except on the fly, and so out of breath she cannot tell me one quarter of what I want to know. Do you think of me as much as I think of you? Do you sometimes cry out when at whist or boston, ‘Honoré, where art thou?’ I did not tell you that besides the conflagration in my head I have had a frightful toothache, followed by a swelling, which makes my present appearance hideous. Do I hear you say, ‘Have it drawn’? The devil! a man clings to his teeth; he has got to bite sometimes, I suppose, even in my career, if only at toil. Hark! I hear the puffing of the goddess.

“Thanks for your tenderness and the provisions; I recognize you in the jam-pot and the flowers.”

After long hesitation, he chose the tragedy of Cromwell for his opening work, — tragic enough, as will be seen by the sequel.

“I have chosen Cromwell for my subject, because it is the finest in modern history. Ever since I began to take it up and weigh it I have flung myself into that period tooth and nail. Ideas crowd upon me; but I am constantly held back by my want of faculty for versification. I shall bite my nails off more than once before I get through the first scene. If you only knew the difficulties of such work! The great Racine spent two whole years in polishing *Phèdre*, the despair of poets. Two years! two years! think of it — two years!

“But how sweet it is, working night and day, to asso-

ciate my work with those so dear to me. Ah, sister, if heaven has indeed endowed me with talent my greatest joy will be to see my fame reflect on all of you! What happiness to vanquish oblivion, and to shed another lustre on the name of Balzac!¹ My blood glows at the thought. When a fine idea comes into my mind I fancy I hear your voice saying to me, ‘Courage!’

“In my off hours I am scratching off *Stella*, a pretty little story. I have abandoned the comic opera. There is no way, in my burrow, of finding a composer. Besides, I ought not to write for the taste of the present day, but do as the Racines and the Corneilles did—work for posterity! And then, I must own the second act was weak, and the first too full of brilliant music.”

“*Too full of brilliant music,*” how much of Honoré’s character is in those five words; he actually saw and heard that opera.

“Well, reflection for reflection, I prefer to reflect on Cromwell. But there are usually two thousand verses in a tragedy; imagine my reflections on that! Pity me—what am I saying? No, don’t pity me, for I am happy; envy me rather, and think of me often.”

His hopes were sometimes mingled with anxieties. Here is a letter in which he expresses them:—

“1820.

“Ah, sister, what tortures are mine! I shall offer a petition to the pope for the first vacant niche of a mar-

¹ This allusion is to Jean-Louis de Balzac, one of the creators of French prose, 1594–1654. He wrote “*Le Socrate Chrétien*,” “*Aristippus*,” etc.

tyr. I have just discovered a fault of construction in my *regicide*, and it swarms with bad lines. I am a pater doloroso this day. If I am, indeed, a miserable rhymester I may as well go hang myself. I and my tragedy are like Perrette and her milk jug; perhaps the comparison will turn out only too true. But I *must* succeed in this work and, no matter what it costs me, have something finished to show when mamma requires me to account for my time. Often I sit up all night to work; but I do not tell her, it would make her uneasy. What troubles come of a love of fame! Long live the grocers, hang them! they sell all day and count up their gains at night, and delectate themselves now and then with some horrid melodrama, and then they are happy! — yes, but they have to spend their lives between soap and cheese. So, long live the men of letters, say I. Yes, but *they* have n't a penny in their pockets, and are only rich in pride. Pooh! let us live and let live, and long live all the world!"

He sends me the plan of his tragedy; but in the utmost secrecy, for he wants to surprise the family. So he writes at the head of his letter, "For your eye only." Months are consumed over the work, about which he writes to me incessantly, with continual alternations of hope and fear. Serious thoughts begin to mingle with his boyish gayety.

"1820.

"I have abandoned the Jardin des Plantes," he writes, "for Père-Lachaise. The Jardin des Plantes is too sad. I get good strong inspiring thoughts during my walks in Père-Lachaise, where I go to study sor-

rows ; true sorrow is so hard to paint—it needs so much simplicity. Of all the affections of the soul grief is the most difficult to represent ; in that we moderns are the very humble servants and followers of the ancients.

“ Surely the noblest epitaphs are the single names : La Fontaine, Masséna, Molière, — names that tell all and make the passer dream ! ”

He dreams of great men ; he pities those who are victims of the vulgar crowd which understands them not, neither their ideas, nor their actions, nor their work, and he thus concludes : —

“ The lives of great men must ever be in all ages the consolation for mediocrity.”

He tells how he takes particular pleasure on that height of Père-Lachaise from which all Paris can be seen ; the spot where his Rastignac stood after rendering his last duty to Père Goriot, where Balzac himself now rests. Standing on that spot, he asked himself more than once, as he thought on the illustrious dead about him, whether the world would hereafter pay homage at his tomb. Sometimes, in his days of hopefulness, he exclaims, like Rastignac, “ The world is mine, for I understand it ! ” And then he returns to his garret, “ where all is dark as an oven, and no one but me could see at all,” he adds merrily.

Like his own Desplein in the *Messe de l'Athée* he complains that the oil of his lamp costs him more than his bread ; but still, he loves his dear garret.

“ The time I spend here will be to me a source of tender memory. To live as I fancy, to work according

to my taste and in my humor, to do nothing if I so will, to rest in thought on a future which I am able to make noble, to think of you and know you are happy, to have the Julie of Rousseau for my mistress, La Fontaine and Molière for my friends, Racine for my master, and Père-Lachaise for my walks — Ah! if it could only last forever.”

The opinion of the family friend who advised making him a copying-clerk came back to his mind at times and made him anxious; then he would wax indignant and exclaim, “I’ll give the lie to that man!” The lie given, he dedicated to him, for all vengeance, one of his finest works. Neither did he forget the smiles of the women who saw his slip at the ball; he resolved to win quite other smiles from their lips. Such thoughts redoubled his ardor for work; trifling circumstances lead often to great results; they do not make a vocation, but they spur the mind to follow one.

In another letter, sufficiently remarkable for me to remember it at this distance of time, he showed he was beginning to distinguish the different horizons of social life, the obstacles to be overcome in all careers before we can force our way through the crowds which throng the outskirts. This letter, evidently written for my mother’s eye, was no doubt given to her, for it is not in my collection. In it he analyzed the cares and the toil which inevitably awaited the lawyer, doctor, soldier, merchant; the lucky chances they must encounter before they could get enough recognition to succeed. He did not conceal the difficulties and the thorns of the literary profession, but he showed that they were every-

where; "if so," he concluded, "why not grant liberty to one who feels within him an irresistible vocation?" This was the moral of the letter. I transcribe one more fragment of the correspondence dated from his garret. It is curious on account of the period at which it was written (April, 1820) and shows the clearness of a mind which was beginning to meditate widely on many subjects.

"I am more infatuated than ever with my career; for a crowd of reasons from which I will select only those which you may not have thought of. Our revolutions are far from being over. I foresee, from the way in which things are stirring, many more storms. Be it good or evil the representative system demands immense talent of all kinds; great writers must necessarily be sought for in political crises, for they alone unite with scientific knowledge the spirit of observation and a profound perception of the human heart. If I am to be a *great one* (which we don't yet know, I admit) I may some day be illustrious in other ways than literature; to add to the title of a great writer that of a great citizen is an ambition which may well tempt a man."

The scene was now to change. Honoré's first hopes were to be followed by his first disappointments. He returned to his father's house at the end of April, 1820, with his tragedy completed. He arrived all joyful, for he counted on a triumph, and he wished certain friends to be present at the reading, — not forgetting the one who had been so mistaken about him.

The friends assembled; the solemn trial began. The

enthusiasm of the reader became more and more chilled as he noted the slight impression he was making, and saw the icy or the downcast faces of those about him. Mine was among the downcast. What I suffered during that reading was a foretaste of the terrors which the first representations of *Vautrin* and *Quinola* were destined to give me. *Cromwell* did not revenge him, as yet, upon M——, who, rough as ever, gave his opinion upon the tragedy without mincing it. Honoré cried out against him, refused to accept his verdict; but the rest of the audience agreed, though more kindly, in thinking the work a failure. My father met with the approval of all by proposing to submit the play to a competent and impartial authority. Monsieur Surville, the engineer of the canal de l'Ourcq, who became soon after his brother-in-law, proposed his former professor at the École Polytechnique. My brother accepted this literary elder as sovereign judge. The good old man, after reading the play conscientiously, declared that the author ought to do anything, no matter what, *except literature*. Honoré received the verdict full in the face without flinching, for he did not admit himself beaten.

“Tragedies are not my line, that’s all,” he said, and returned to work.

But fifteen months of garret life had so reduced him that my mother would not let him go back to it. She insisted on his coming home, where she looked after him solieitously. It was then that he wrote, in the space of five years, ten novels in forty volumes, which he considered mere attempts at his art, and very imperfect ones; for this reason he published them under

various pseudonyms, out of respect for the name of Balzac, once celebrated, and to which he so much desired to add a lustre of his own. Mediocrity is not so modest! I am careful not to give the names of these books, wishing to obey his express wish that they should never be acknowledged.

Materially most comfortable in his father's house he nevertheless regretted his dear garret, where he had the quiet that was lacking to him in a sphere of activity in which ten persons (counting masters and servants) revolved about him; where the small as well as the great events of the family disturbed him; and where, even when at work, he heard the wheels of the domestic machine which the vigilant and indefatigable mistress kept in motion. Eighteen months after his return to his father's roof I was living, for the time being, at Bayeux, and our correspondence began again.¹ My brother, then among his own people, wrote much more of them than of himself, and with the freedom his confidence in me permitted. He gives me domestic scenes and conversations which might be thought whole pages taken from the *Comédie Humaine*. In one of these letters he compares his father to the pyramids of Egypt, unchangeable, immutable amid the sand-storms of the desert. In another he announces the marriage of our sister Laurence. Her portrait, that of her lover, the enthusiasm of the family for the new son-in-law, are all painted with a master's hand, and the pen of Balzac. He concludes with these words: —

¹ Mademoiselle Laure de Balzac married, May, 1820, Monsieur Midy de la Grèneraye Surville, engineer of the department of *ponts et chaussées*, — public works.

“ We are fine originals in this holy family of ours. What a pity I can't put us all into my novels.”¹

As the majority of these letters would have no interest for the public, I can only extract such parts as relate to Honoré himself. The following will show his first discouragements. He is advancing in life and sees that the way is difficult.

“ You ask for particulars of the fête, and to-day I have nothing to give you but sadness of heart. I think myself the most unhappy of all the unhappy beings who are struggling to live beneath that beauteous celestial vault which the Eternal has starred with his almighty hand. Fêtes! it is but a mournful litany I can send you in reply. My father, on his way back from Laurence's marriage was struck in the left eye by Louis's whip. To think that Louis's whip should injure that fine old age, the joy and pride of us all! . . . My heart bleeds. At first the injury was thought greater than it is, happily. Father's apparent calmness pained me. I would rather he had complained; I should have thought that complaints would relieve him. But he is so proud, and justly so, of his moral strength, that I dared

¹ Mme. Surville's family loyalty omits the rest of this letter in which, after relating “ very confidentially ” the nervous condition of his mother and grandmother he adds, “ Alas! how comes it that people have so little indulgence for others in this life; why do they seek to turn everything into a means of wounding their fellows? How few are willing to live in that hearty good-will that you and I and papa can live in. Nothing angers me so much as these great demonstrations of affection which smother you with kisses and call you selfish if you don't exaggerate your own, and have no conception of inward feelings which only manifest themselves when the right time comes.”

not even comfort him; yet an old man's suffering is as painful to see as a woman's. I could neither think nor work and yet I must work, must write, write to earn the independence they will not give me. I must endeavor to get my freedom by these novels; and what novels! Ah, Laure, what a fall for my glorious projects! If they would only have given me an allowance of fifteen hundred francs a year I might have worked for fame; but for such work I must have time, and I must live!¹ I have no other way than this ignoble one by which to win my independence. And if I do not quickly earn some money the spectre of the place will reappear. I may not be made a notary, for Monsieur T—— has lately died; but I think that M——, that dreadful man, is even now inquiring for a place for me. Regard me as dead if they put me under that extinguisher; I shall become like the horse of a treadmill which does his thirty or forty rounds an hour, eats, drinks, and sleeps by rule and measure. And they call that mechanical rotation, that perpetual recurrence of the same things, living!

“Ah, if something would cast a charm over my cold existence! I have no flowers in my life, and yet I am at the season when they bloom. What good will fortune or enjoyments do me when my youth is gone? Why wear the clothes of the actor if we never play the rôle? The old man is one who has dined and looks on to see others eat, but as for me, I am young, my plate

¹ He had begged his parents to grant him an allowance of fifteen hundred francs a year that he might return to a garret in Paris, where he could have solitude and the facilities for literary training of which he was deprived at Villeparisis.

is empty, and I hunger! Laure, Laure, my two immense and sole desires,—*to be famous and to be loved*,— will they ever be satisfied?

“ I send you two new books. They are still very bad and, above all, unliterary. You will find one or two rather funny things, and some types of character, but a miserable plot. The veil does not fall, unluckily, till after they are printed; and as for corrections, I can't even think of them, they would cost more than the book. The only merit of these two novels is, dear, that they bring me in a thousand francs; but the money is only payable in bills at long sight. Will it be paid?

“ Still, I am beginning to feel my pulse and understand my powers. But to be conscious of what I am worth, and to sacrifice the flower of my ideas on such rubbish! It is enough to make me weep. Ah, if I had only the wherewithal to subsist on, I would soon find me a niche where I could write books that would live—perhaps! My ideas change so much that my method must change too. Before long there will be betwixt the me of to-day and the me of to-morrow the difference that exists between the youth of twenty and the man of thirty. I reflect, my ideas mature; I do know that nature has treated me well in the heart and in the head she has given me. Believe me, dear sister (for I need a believer), I do not despair of one day becoming something; for I can now see plainly that *Cromwell* had not even the merit of being an embryo. As for my novels they are not worth a curse, but they pretend to nothing.”

He judged himself too severely ; it is true that these early works contained as yet the mere germs of his talent, but he made such progress from one to another that he might have put his name to the last without injury to his coming reputation. Happily, he could pass quickly from grief to joy, for the letters which followed are full of gaiety and high spirits. His novels are better paid and cost him less pains to write.

“If you only knew how little trouble it is to me to plan these books, to head the chapters, and fill the pages ! You shall judge for yourself, however, because, now that your husband invites me, I shall certainly spend three good months with you this year.”

He lays a host of plans, he has a multitude of hopes ; he imagines himself rich and married. He begins to wish for wealth, but only as a means of success. He describes the wife he would like, and speaks of conjugal happiness in the tone of a man who has not yet meditated on the *Physiologie du mariage*. He goes to Isle-Adam to stay with his friend, Monsieur de Villers. There he attends the funeral of a physician, such as he describes in the *Médecin de Campagne*. This man, whom he had known during his previous visits, the benefactor of the neighborhood, loved and mourned by all, gave him the idea of that book. The man then buried became in after years the living Monsieur Benassis. Wherever he went he studied what he saw, — towns, villages, country-places, and their inhabitants ; collecting words or speeches which revealed a character or painted

a situation. He called, rather slightly, the scrap-book in which he kept these notes of what he saw and heard his "meat-safe."

But, rocked to sleep for a time by hope, he was soon awakened by sad reality. His novels not only did not make him rich, but they barely sufficed for his necessary expenses. The doubts and anxieties of his family were renewed. His parents talked of taking a stand. To have succeeded in getting his books printed at all was, however, a success, and showed unusual ability and a gift of fascination that was far from common; for publishers are long unattainable to the poor aspirant, who is usually rebuffed with the discouraging words, "You are unknown, and yet you wish me to publish your books." To have a name before writing is therefore the first problem to solve in this career, unless a man can enter the literary battle-field like a cannon-ball. Now my brother did not think his works had, as yet, that power of propulsion. Besides, he had no influence to aid him in the world of letters, neither had he any one to aid or to encourage him, except one school friend who afterwards entered the magistracy and who wrote Honoré's first anonymous novel with him. Dreading lest he should be forced to accept the chains which were being forged for him, ashamed of the dependence in which he was kept in his own home, he resolved to attempt an enterprise which alone seemed to offer him a chance of freedom. This was in 1823, when my brother was nearly twenty-five years old. Here begin the disasters which led to all the troubles and misfortunes of his life.

CHAPTER III.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

BALZAC'S childhood was divided thus: four years in the house of his peasant nurse, four years and one month in his own home, six years and two months in the seminary of Vendôme without leaving it for a single day. His sister has told us of his sunny nature during the eight years they were together. Of the subsequent six years passed in that gray and gloomy institution she tells but three things: his eager longing for the family visits; the fact (which she states in positive terms) that the first part of *Louis Lambert* is Honoré's own history in all its particulars; and, thirdly, the condition in which the boy was returned to his parents. Balzac himself takes up the tale from his eleventh year. What voiceless sufferings must lie in the years from eight to eleven, during which the sunny little child was broken in to the stern rule and desolate loneliness from which there was no escape. Remembering Balzac's imagination, the mighty gift that was born in him, it is possible to form some idea of what his dawning soul endured in its first struggle with experience.

We might suppose that the ties of family would have been weak in Balzac, exiled as he was in childhood and later from his home, where it is quite plain, though

not acknowledged by his sister or himself, that he was never understood or wisely treated. On the contrary, the spirit of filial reverence and affection which is so marked a trait in French character was never stronger than in Balzac; and the abstract principle of the Family is one of the bases on which he built his work.

The dreamy little town of Vendôme in Touraine was the site of the chief French college of the Oratorians, a fraternity instituted in Italy in 1575 by Saint Philippe de Neri, and brought to France by Cardinal de Berulle in 1611. The object of this brotherhood was the education of youth, more especially that of preachers. To this original purpose, seems to have been added in Balzac's day that of a semi-military academy, sending a certain number of cadets to the army. When the Convention decreed the abolition of the teaching fraternities the Oratorians of Vendôme quietly closed their buildings and dispersed themselves about the neighborhood. After the Revolution was over they returned and re-established the school under its former rules. On its register may be read this entry: "No. 460. Honoré Balzac, aged eight years and one month. Has had the small-pox and is without infirmity. Temperament sanguine; easily excited; subject to feverish attacks. Entered June 22, 1807. Left August 22, 1813."

Balzac's account of his life at this school is an invaluable record. Here we see the first making of his spirit; we see his mind beating its way out to the light, untrammelled by knowledge of the world, and conscious of no restraint or limit. The same power of his

mind to sustain itself on its own pinions remained with him through life, but we find other explanations of it; it was then a conscious power, affected by environment; here it is that of the pure, uninfluenced spirit, opening itself to the knowledge of wisdom at that period of life when the human creature is in simple relation to the divine; for "can anything be nearer to God than genius in the heart of a child?" The following is an abridgment of his own account of his school years as given in *Louis Lambert*.

Standing in the centre of the town on the little river Loir, which bathes its outer walls, the College is seen to be a vast inclosure of ancient brick and stone buildings, unchanged since the period of their erection, and containing all the appurtenances necessary for an institution of its kind, — chapel, theatre, infirmary, bake-house, gardens, and a system of irrigation and water supply. This college, the most important educational establishment in the middle provinces, derived its pupils from those provinces and from the colonies. The rules forbade vacations beyond the walls. Letters to parents were obligatory on certain days; so was confession. Sins and affections were thus under strict supervision. All things bore the stamp of monastic regularity.

The two or three hundred pupils contained in the institution were divided into four sections: the *Minimes*, the *Petits*, the *Moyens*, and the *Grands*, the latter being the head class in rhetoric, philosophy, special mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Each section occupied a building of its own, with classrooms and a courtyard opening on a broad piece of ground leading

to the refectory, where the pupils took their meals together. To ameliorate their lives, deprived as they were of all communication with the world without, and severed from family pleasures, the Fathers allowed the boys to keep pigeons and to cultivate little gardens. They were also permitted to play cards and act dramas during the holidays; a band of music belonged to the military section of the college, and a shop was set up on the common ground near the refectory, where the pupils could buy pens, ink and paper, balls, marbles, stilts, and knives, and other boyish treasures.

To this unnatural life, parted from mother and sisters, alone among boys and men, and aware that until his education was finished there would be no change in it even for a single day, the child of eight was condemned. Happily, he was passionately fond of reading (having already devoured all that came in his way in his father's house) and the college librarian allowed him to take such books as he liked, paying little or no attention to those he carried away with him, nor to those he read in the tranquil precincts of the library. Absorbed in the delights of this passion he neglected his studies, and composed poems which gave no promise of future greatness, if we may judge by the following unwieldy line, the first of an epic on the Incas :

O Inca! O roi infortuné et malheureux.

This epic fell into the hands of his schoolmates, who dubbed him "Poet," in derision of the performance. But ridicule did not repress him. He continued to scribble sorry verses in spite of Monsieur Mareschal, the director, who told him the fable of the fledgling that

fell out of the nest into many troubles, because it tried to fly before its wings were grown. All to no purpose, however; he persisted in his desultory reading, and became the least assiduous, the laziest, dreamiest pupil in his division, and the oftenest punished. He was then twelve years old. George Sand records: "A friend of mine, who sat on the same bench with him, told me that he was a very absorbed child, rather heavy in appearance, poor at his classics, and appearing stupid to his masters, — a great proof of either precocious genius or strong individuality, and so it seemed in the eyes of the person who told me."

During the first months of his life at Vendôme he fell a victim to a sort of nostalgia, the symptoms of which were not perceived by the masters. Accustomed to the open air, to independence, to the care of friends, and to thinking and dreaming in the sunshine, it was very hard for him to bow to college rules, and to live within the four walls of a room where eighty lads were forced to sit erect and silent before their desks. His senses were endowed with extreme delicacy, and he suffered greatly from this community of life. Exhalations, which poisoned the air and mingled with the other odors of a classroom that was often dirty, gave forth the fumes of a sort of humus which affected his sense of smell, a sense, he says, in closer relation than any other to the cerebral system, and which, if vitiated, must create invisible disturbance to the organs of thought. The loss of the pure country air he had hitherto breathed, the change in his habits, the discipline of the school, all combined to depress his vitality. He would sit for hours leaning his head upon his left hand, and gazing

into the courtyard, at the foliage of the trees or the clouds in the sky. He seemed to be studying his lessons, but from time to time the master, noticing his motionless pen, would call out: "You are doing nothing!" That fatal "you are doing nothing" was like a pin pricking his heart.

He had no recreation, because of the "pensums" he was forced to write. The pensum was a varying number of lines to be copied during recess; and the boy was so laden down with them that he did not have six entirely free days in two years. He brought these pensums upon him in a dozen different ways. His memory was so good that he never studied his lessons; it sufficed him to hear his schoolmates recite the appointed bit of French or Latin or even grammar, to be able to repeat it when his turn came. Sometimes, by ill-luck, the master would reverse the order and question Balzac first, and then he often did not know what the lesson was. He used to wait till the last moment to write his themes, and if he had a book to finish, or a revery to pursue, the theme was neglected, — fruitful source of pensums.

Another of his trials was that of physical suffering. For want of motherly home-care, the *Petits* and the *Minimes* were covered with chilblains on their hands and feet. During the winters he never walked without severe pain. This he shared in common with others, for he records the fact that out of sixty scholars in his class scarcely ten were free from this torture. To add to it, no gloves were allowed to protect their chapped and bleeding hands.

For neglected themes, lessons ill-learned, and boy-

Prison of the Collège of Vendôme.

From a drawing by A. Queyroy.



ish pranks, the pensum sufficed; but other offences, especially those of disrespect, real or imagined, to a master were punished with what was called "the fernle." This was inflicted by a strip of leather, two inches wide, applied to the shrinking hands of the pupils with all the strength of an angry master. But there was still a third punishment greatly dreaded by the other pupils, but which Balzac came to look on as a boon, for it gave him release from his lessons with solitude and the freedom to dream. It was called by the curious name of the *culotte de bois*, and consisted in being locked up in a cell, or cage, six feet square, the wooden sides of which had a grating round the top to let in the air. Here he was sometimes imprisoned for over a month. The old porter, père Verdun, whose duty it was to lock the recalcitrant scholars into these cages, was still living, at the age of eighty-four, some time after Balzac's death. The old man remembered "those great black eyes," and also the fact that he sometimes took him to a prison of greater severity, a gloomy turreted building, detached from the main college and standing at the very edge of the Loir.¹

It may be very short-sighted of us to regret these trials of the child's life, which strengthened the wings of his spirit and developed an inward power of which he might never have been fully conscious without them.

In the solitude of those cells, not greater though more tangible than the solitude of mind in which he lived, reading was impossible, and the time was spent chiefly in mental arguments or in recalling curious facts

¹ See the illustration, from a drawing made on the spot by A. Queyroy, for Champfleury's pamphlet, "Balzac au Collège."

to illustrate them. Thoughts came to him by intuition (for he could not as yet have had insight) of which the following may stand as specimens: —

“Happily for me there are joyful moments when the walls of the classroom disappear, and I am away — in the meadows. What delight to float upon thought like a bird on the wing!”

“To think is to see. All knowledge rests on deduction, — a chink of vision by which we descend from cause to effect, returning upward from effect to cause.”

“I feel, sometimes, that strange fantastic sufferings are going on within me in spite of myself. For instance, when I think strongly on the sensation the blade of my penknife would cause me if thrust into my flesh I instantly experience a sharp pain as though I had really cut myself. *An idea causing physical suffering!* what is to be made of that?”

It is well to remember that these speculations (and others like them not given here) were made and written down before the physiologists of the last half-century had explained or even perceived them.

“When I first read of the battle of Austerlitz I saw it all. I heard the cannon and the shouts of the soldiers; I smelt the powder; I heard the tramp of horses and the cries of men. I saw the plain where the armies clashed together as though I stood on the heights of Santon. The sight was awful, — like a page out of the Apocalypse.”

“How is it that men have reflected so little on the events of sleep which *prove* to them that they have a double life? Is there not a dawning science in that

phenomenon? If it is not the germ of a science it certainly reveals extraordinary powers in man; it shows a frequent disunion of our two natures, — a fact round which my mind is constantly revolving.”

Reading was a hunger of his soul which nothing appeased. He devoured books of all sorts; he even found unspeakable pleasure in reading dictionaries in default of other books. The analysis of a word, its conformation, its history, were to him a text for reverie. “Often,” he said, “I have made delightful journeys embarked on a single word. Starting from Greece I have reached Rome, and traversed the modern eras. What a glorious book might be written on the life and adventures of a word! But who can explain to us philosophically the transition from sensation to thought, from thought to word, from the word to its hieroglyphical expression, from hieroglyphs to alphabet, from the alphabet to written language?”

A strong inclination led him to the study of mysticism. “*Abyssus abyssum*,” he said, “our mind is an abyss which delights in depths.” This taste for the “things of heaven” (a phrase of his own), this *mens divini*, was due perhaps to the first books he had read. The Old and New Testaments had fallen into his hand in his father’s library before he was seven years old. Was he merely fascinated by the romantic charm of those poems of the Orient, or did the child’s soul in its first innocence sympathize with the sublime piety which hands divine have shed within that book? However this may be, he had since read the writings of Saint Teresa and Madame Guyon, and they were to him a continuation of the Bible and the first food of

his adult intelligence. This study uplifted his heart and purified it, and gave him a thirst for the Divine nature. Thanks to these first impressions he continued pure in thought throughout his college life, and this noble virginity of the senses had the effect, necessarily, of increasing the faculties of his mind.

Out of his mystical studies he formed for himself a theory of angels, which may be summed up as follows: There are within us two distinct beings, — an inner and an outer being. The individual in whom the inward being has triumphed over the outward being is an angel. If a man desires to obey his true calling he must nourish the angelic nature within him. If, failing to possess this vision of his destiny, he lets the lower tendencies predominate, his natural powers pass into the service of his material being, and the angel within him slowly perishes. On the other hand, if he nourishes the inward angel with the essences that accord with it, his soul rises above matter, endeavors to get free from it, and when death comes the angel alone survives and true life begins. Although created beings are apparently all of one nature here below, they are in fact divided, according to the perfection of their *inward being*, into separate spheres whose sayings and ethics are alien to each other.

He loved to plunge into that world of mystery, invisible to the senses, and exercise his mind on the toil of thought. To him pure love, the love of which we dream in youth, was the coming together of two angelic natures. Nothing could equal the ardor with which he longed to meet a woman-angel.

The apparent indolence and torpidity in which he

lived, his neglect of school duty, and the repugnance he showed to themes and pensums, together with the frequent punishments he incurred, gave him the unchallenged reputation of being the idlest and most incorrigible pupil in the school. The masters thought slightly of his capacity, and pronounced him an ordinary scholar and a dull boy. It is noticeable that Balzac does not resent or greatly complain of the hardships and punishments he was forced to endure; he makes no claim to pity on that score; on the contrary, he seems to accept them as justly due in a measure to his idle ways. The recognition of authority was a tenet of his faith in after years, and he appears to have practised it in his earliest experience; possibly that experience may have inculcated the doctrine in his mind.

It was during his last year at Vendôme (he was then fourteen) that he wrote the Treatise on the Will which Father Hangoult, the master, or regent as he was called, confiscated and destroyed in his anger at finding it in place of a theme which ought to have been written, saying as he did so: "So this is the rubbish for which you neglect your lessons!"

It does not come within the scope of this memoir to give a descriptive account of that treatise, the loss of which Balzac always regretted, believing that it gave a true picture of his mind at that period of his life. He endeavored to replace it in *Louis Lambert*; and has no doubt done so faithfully in the main, with some assistance from his mature mind.¹

¹ The reader is referred to the American translation of *Louis Lambert*. It is preceded by an introduction by Mr. George Fred-eric Parsons, which develops and makes intelligible to a patient

Six months after the confiscation of the treatise Balzac left college. He was attacked by feverish symptoms which clung to him persistently and produced at times a sort of coma, caused, as Balzac himself said, by "a congestion of ideas," and also, we may add, by the accumulated suffering and unhealthiness of his life. The head of the college, Monsieur Mareschal, wrote to his parents, and his mother promptly removed him from the school and brought him home.

No sooner did the boy return to a life of freedom and natural enjoyment than he recovered his health; a strong proof of the vigor of his constitution and also of his mind. In all estimates of Balzac's nature attention must be paid to the fact that he was eminently sound and healthy in mind and body. Though his spirit rose to regions that could be reached only by intuition, and ruminated over problems the study of which we associate with fragility of body and aloofness from the things of life, he was at the same time, and quite as thoroughly, a man with human instincts, loving life and enjoying it. In this lies, no doubt, one of the secrets of his power. It was a part of the many-sidedness of his genius; it enabled him to actually live and have his being in the men and women whom he evoked from the depths and heights of human nature. His temperament was, above all things, genial, and his humor gay. No pressure of worldly anxiety and debt, no crushing toil,

reader the thought of a book which contains divine wisdom, but is so difficult of comprehension as to need a guide. The day will come, no doubt, when its difficulties will have vanished before the world's clearer knowledge. At present this book, written fifty years ago, is still in advance of the times.

no hidden grief with which the man, like the child in his cell, was acquainted, could destroy that healthy cheerfulness or prevent the rebound into hearty and even jovial gayety. "Robust" is the word that seems to suit him on the material side of his nature, applying even to his mental processes. He was gifted with a strong common-sense, which guided his judgment on men and circumstances; though at times, it is true, his imagination interfered with his judgment, as in the famous trip to Sardinia, of which his sister will tell us, and in the harmless eccentricities related (with a grain of truth and much exaggeration) in the rather frothy and self-conscious writings of his literary associates. We may remark, in passing, that nearly all the contemporaries (except a few choice minds) who rushed into print to tell the public what they knew of Balzac, seem to have been thinking more of themselves than of him. They have done him some passing injury, but in judging of Balzac we must always remember that he was a man not for posterity only, but for the posterity of ages. Therefore he needs no controversy about him. It is sufficient to state such facts as can be proved, and draw such natural deductions as may seem just and reasonable, — making no attempt to gainsay the foolish things that have been written of him. So with his books; each generation will have its own interpretation to put upon them, for they have their message to all. Let the present day throw its best light upon his work, and leave insufficient criticism to wear itself out, — already this is happening.

The lad's health restored, his mind, which had hitherto been guided by the intuitions of a virgin spirit and

fed on abstract thought, now added to the mental wealth thus acquired a registration of the beings and events among which his new freedom cast him, amassing materials which he stored away in his vast memory. This was unconsciously done on his part, but we who know the use he made of them can look back and see the process. Here, then, were the sources of his training for his ultimate work.

His fifteenth year was spent at home among the beauties of his dear Touraine. "Do not ask me why I love Touraine," he says; "I love it as an artist loves art; I love it less than I love you, but without Touraine perhaps I should not now be living." To this year we owe the inspiration of those exquisite descriptions of scenery in *La Grenadière* and the *Lys dans la Vallée*. Perhaps it may be true to say that the greatest charm of Balzac's work lies in his pictures of nature, — wayside sketches, as it were, never forced or written to order, simply the necessary descriptions of the scenes through which the reader has to pass as the story leads him.¹

At the close of the year 1814, when the family moved to Paris and took a house in the rue du Roi-Doré, in the Marais, Honoré was again sent from home to schools in the neighborhood, where he remained finishing his education till the autumn of 1816, when he was seventeen and a half years old. Within that period he wit-

¹ Among them may be specified the description of the Lac de Bourget in the *Peau de Chagrin*; the beginning of the *Médecin de Campagne*; the park in *Les Paysans*; that wonderful picture of the desert in *Une Passion dans le désert*; but above and before all, the opening of *Séraphita*.

nessed great national events : the return from Elba, the Hundred Days, the presence of the Allied Armies, and the Restoration. We can fancy what an effect these scenes must have had on an imagination like his, — but indeed we need not fancy it, for we can read it in his books. Surely he knew the old hero of the Beresina in the flesh, and the story of the Emperor was not altogether the work of his brain ; and he must, beyond a doubt, have been present at that last review in the Carrousel, which he thus describes in the language of an eye-witness : —

“The expectant multitude throbbed with enthusiasm. France was about to bid farewell to Napoleon on the eve of a campaign of which all present, even the humblest citizen, foresaw the dangers. The French empire hung in the balance, — to be or not to be. That thought appeared to fill all minds, of soldiers and citizens alike, as they stood together silently in the great inclosure above which hovered the genius and the eagles of Napoleon. Army and people seemed to be taking farewell of each other, — possibly an eternal farewell. All hearts, even those most hostile to the Emperor, breathed ardent prayers to heaven for the nation’s glory. Men who were weary of the struggle between France and Europe laid aside their hatreds as they passed beneath the arch of triumph, acknowledging in their souls that in the hour of danger Napoleon was France. The clock of the palace struck the half-hour. Suddenly the hum of voices ceased. The silence grew so deep that the voice of a child was heard. The spectators, who seemed to live by their eyes only, became aware of the clank of spurs and swords echoing among the columns of the palace gateway.

“A small man, rather fat, dressed in a green uniform with white small-clothes and top-boots, suddenly appeared, wearing on his head a three-cornered hat in which lay a spell almost as potent as that of the man himself. The broad ribbon of the legion of honor floated on his breast; a small sword hung at his side. The man was seen by every eye, instantly, in all parts of the great square. The drums beat; the bands played the first notes of a martial air, which was caught up and repeated by all the instruments from the softest flute to the kettledrums. All hearts quivered at the warlike call; the colors dipped; the soldiers presented arms with a simultaneous motion which moved each gun throughout the whole Carrousel. Words of command flew through the ranks like echoes. Cries of ‘Long live the Emperor!’ came from the multitude; the whole mass swayed and quivered and shook. Napoleon had mounted his horse. That action had given life to the silent assemblage, voice to the instruments, movement to the flags and the eagles, emotion to all faces. The high stone walls of the palace seemed to cry with the multitude, ‘Long live the Emperor!’ It was not a human thing; there was magic in it,—the phantom of divine power; or, to speak more truly, the fleeting image of a fleeting reign. The man thus surrounded with so much love, enthusiasm, devotion, prayer, for whom the sun had driven every cloud from the sky, sat motionless on his horse, three feet in advance of the dazzling escort that followed him, with the grand marshal to right and his chamberlain to left of him. In the midst of this mighty emotion of which he was the object, not a feature of his face gave token of feeling.

“My God, yes,” an old grenadier was heard to say: “it was always so; under fire at Wagram, among the dead in the Moskowa, he was quiet as a lamb—yes, that’s he!”

When Balzac finished his legal studies, which lasted from 1816 to 1820, he was twenty-one years old. The Restoration was fully accomplished, and during those years he saw something of it socially through his family, though not in the degree to which the fame of his books afterwards introduced him. His political opinions (of which more will be said later) leaned to those of the old régime, but it was impossible for a mind so many-sided in knowledge and insight to be partisan, and his politics rested chiefly on certain broad lines of principle. His absolute impartiality, which was not that of an easy-going nature, but rather that of an ability to see and judge all sides deliberately, is evident in his books. All opinions are brought forward in the human comedy, but it would be hard to find a partisan bias for or against any of them; and due notice of this should be taken in reading his works. In fact, his admiration, and even his sympathy, were often given where his judgment saw and stated essential error, as in the case of Napoleon. Wherever he brings him on the scene it is as a mighty presence; and certainly few things have ever been written in any language so vivid, so impetuous, or so full of a certain inspiration as the Story of the Emperor in the *Médecin de Campagne*.

But the fateful day came when he was to choose his career, or rather, when a career was to be chosen and forced upon him. His sister has told us the story, but here, as elsewhere in her narrative, we must read be-

tween the lines. It is plain that his father (who, we should remember, was fifty-two years old when Honoré was born), notwithstanding his own independence, and his demand for liberty of thought and action, denied that liberty to his son. He was totally ignorant of the lad's real powers; probably he took his opinion of him from the Oratorian report: "a poor scholar and a dull boy;" and there is evidence in Balzac's letters that this was the estimation in which his family held him for many years. "Will they still call me an incapable and a do-nothing?" he said after several of his great works had been written. Madame de Balzac, a stirring woman, seems not only to have shared her husband's views, but also, at times, to have instigated them. At any rate, the financial injury the father had entailed upon his children by the purchase of an annuity made it, according to French parental ideas, of the utmost consequence that the son should go to work in some way that might speedily bring wealth into the family. The profession of notary is one of the most lucrative, with the advantage of little risk, and the opportunity of so placing his son fell, almost unsought, into the father's hand.

Confronted with the family opinion of his mental capacity, and with their reasonable worldly expectations of him, we see the dawning consciousness in the youth who had written the *Treatise on the Will* of a higher vocation, of a thirst to exercise some as yet unknown but instinctive power of his own spirit,—held in check, however, by the filial reverence of a French son. The child had borne his trial in the wooden cage; this was the trial of the youth. His

sister has told us how it ended joyfully in freedom and a garret.

We can fancy now what that garret was to him, — the first freedom of his life! freedom to make himself that which his inner being told him he could be. It is necessary to bear in mind this inward consciousness of faith in himself; a faith, however inspired, which asked no support from others; which bore him triumphantly through something harder to endure and to conquer than doubts of friends, incessant debt, or the gigantic toil of after years, — through the discovery of his own incapacity. For the strange fact remains that he proved at first incapable in his chosen vocation. With all the wealth of observation, imagination, intuition, and power of philosophical thought that were even then at his command, he could not construct or shape his work nor bring his style into proper form. It seems incredible, but his sister vouches for it as true, that he wrote and published forty volumes before he could write one to which he was willing to put his name: “Ah! sister,” he cries, “what a fall for my glorious hopes!” We have only to pause and think upon these facts to perceive the force of his struggle and the splendor of the courage that carried him through it.

He has left a more interesting and valuable picture of his life in the rue Lesdiguières than that contained in his merry letters to his sister. It is interesting to notice, by the way, that his father insisted that Honoré should live there incognito, and that friends should be told he was staying with a cousin at Alby; so that in case of failure his literary attempt might not be made known. Perhaps this command of his father was the origin of

his much talked-of habit of disappearing for months to write in solitude, during which time his friends could reach him only through a system of pass-words.

“I was then living,” he says, addressing the lady to whom he dedicated *Facino Cane*, “in a little street which you probably do not know, the rue Lesdiguières. Love of knowledge had driven me to a garret, where I worked during the night, passing my days in the library of MONSIEUR, which was near by.¹ I lived frugally, taking upon me the conditions of monastic life, so essential to workers. I seldom walked for pleasure, even when the weather was fine. One sole passion drew me away from my studies, but even that was a form of study. I walked the streets to observe the manners and ways of the faubourg, to study its inhabitants and learn their characters. Ill-dressed as the workmen themselves, and quite as indifferent to the proprieties, there was nothing about me to put them on their guard. I mingled in their groups, watched their bargains, and heard their disputes at the hour when their day’s work ended. The faculty of observation had become intuitive with me. I could enter the souls of others, all the while conscious of their bodies — or rather, I grasped external details so thoroughly that my mind instantly passed beyond them; I possessed the faculty of living the life of the individual on whom I exercised my observation, and of substituting myself for him, like the dervish in the Arabian Nights who assumed the body and soul of those over whom he pronounced certain words.

“Often, between eleven o’clock and midnight, when

¹ Afterwards called the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal; but he gives it the Bourbon name.

I met some workman and his wife returning home from the Ambigu-Comique I amused myself by following them. The worthy pair usually talked first of the play they had just seen; then, from one thing to another, they came to their own affairs; the mother would, perhaps, be dragging her child along by the hand, paying no attention to its complaints or inquiries; husband and wife reckoned up their gains; told what they expected to make on the morrow, and spent that sum in fancy in a dozen different ways. Then they dropped into household details, groaned over the excessive cost of potatoes, the increased price of fuel, and talked of the strong remonstrance they intended to make to the baker. Their discussions often grew heated, and each side betrayed his and her character in picturesque language. As I listened to these persons I imbibed their life; I felt their ragged clothing on my back; my feet walked in their broken shoes; their desires, their wants passed into my soul, — or my soul passed into theirs. It was the dream of a waking man. I grew angry, as they did, against some foreman who ill-used them, against annoying customers who obliged them to call many times before they could get their money. To quit my own life, to become some other individual through the excitation of a moral faculty, and to play this game at will, was the relaxation of my studious hours.

“To what have I owed this gift? Is it second-sight? Can it be one of those faculties the abuse of which leads to insanity? I have never sought to discover the causes of this power; I only know that I possess it and use it. I must tell you that ever since I became aware of this faculty, I have decomposed

the elements of those heterogeneous masses called the People, and I have analyzed them in a manner that enables me to appraise both their good and evil qualities."

Balzac's mind dealt with more than one philosophical problem of which his own life was a startling illustration; but he was not introspective in a selfish and personal way, or he might have thought himself under the ban of some pursuing fate. For all through his life—even to death—no sooner had he gained a vantage-ground than it was cut from under his feet. He was now to lose his brief independence. Only fifteen months of his two years opportunity had expired, but the failure of his tragedy, and the deprivations he had borne must have seemed to his parents to justify their hope that "a little suffering would bring him to submission." He was not allowed to remain in his garret, but was taken home to Villeparisis, eighteen miles from Paris and from libraries,—this, we must remember, was before the days of railroads. Here he had no solitude and no tranquil time for study; on the contrary, he was surrounded by disturbing domestic elements. But, cheerful as ever, and "good to live with," as Madame Surville says of him, his letters of this period make no complaint.

Still, with all his courage, his mind seems to have misgiven him as to the possibility of working for his vocation under such circumstances. He asked his father to make him an allowance of fifteen hundred francs a year and let him live in Paris. We smile at the sum, which was scarcely more than it would be now; for the times of the Restoration were costly.

His request was refused. This refusal appears to have been the turning-point of his outward career. Had his request been granted, it is certain that the circumstances of that career would have been very different from what they were; so far as we can now judge, the incubus that lay upon his whole life and was an agent in his death, though not the cause of it, the incubus of debt, would never have come to him.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS SISTER'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

MANY persons are unaware that my brother spent as much mind and energy in struggling against misfortune as in writing the *Comédie Humaine*, that work which, however it may be judged, satisfied the most ardent desire of his life and gave him fame. Those who were in the secret of his life and trials ask themselves, with as much compassion as respect, how it was that a man so weighed down could find the time, the physical strength, and above all, the moral force to sustain such enormous labor. If his parents had granted him the modest income of fifteen hundred francs which was all he asked to enable him to win his first success, what adversities would have been spared to him and also to his family; what a fortune he would then have made with his pen, of which he knew the value. Energetic and patient, like all genius, he would have gone back to solitude where that modest allowance would have sufficed for his wants; for, extreme in all his desires, he needed either a palace or a garret; lover of luxury that he was, he knew how to do without it. "A garret has its poesy," he often said to me. It was only where poesy did not exist that he was ill at ease.

But the insoluble question remains: Does not misfortune develop talent? Would Balzac, rich and happy,

have become the great inquisitor of humanity; would he have surprised its secrets, laid bare its feelings, and judged its misery from so vast a height? That clearness of vision granted to superior minds, which enables them to seize all aspects of an idea, is it ever acquired unless at the cost of privation and the experience of suffering? Yet such clearness of vision itself has a fatal side, for many who cannot comprehend these mighty faculties (and their number is large) sometimes cast doubts upon the moral worth of those who possess them. The dry details that follow, which I shall endeavor to abridge as much as possible, are necessary to explain the misfortunes of Balzac's life, — misfortunes so little or so imperfectly known that even his friends have sometimes attributed them to follies which he did not commit.

Whenever Honoré went to Paris he stayed in the former apartment of the family in the Marais, which his father still retained. There he became intimate with a neighbor to whom he related his fears of being forced into a profession he disliked. This friend, a man of business, advised him to seek for some good enterprise which should make him independent, and he offered to supply the funds. Balzac, transformed into a speculator, was advised to begin as a publisher of books, and he accordingly did so. He was the first to think of publishing compact editions (which have since enriched so many libraries), and he brought out *in one volume* the complete works of Molière and also of La Fontaine. He carried on the two publications at the same time, so greatly did he fear that one or the other might be snatched from him by competition.

Though these editions did not succeed, it was only because their publisher, unknown to the trade, was not sustained by the fraternity, who refused to sell or to receive his books. The sum lent to the enterprise did not suffice to pay for wide advertising which might perhaps have brought purchasers; the editions therefore were completely unknown; at the end of a year not twenty copies had been sold; and to escape paying further rent for the warehouse in which they were stored, my brother sold the whole for the price, by weight, of the fine paper it had cost him so much to print.

Instead of making money on this first enterprise, Honoré was left in debt. It was the opening wedge to that long series of such experiences which were eventually to make him so wise in judging of men and things. In after years he would not have attempted to publish books under such conditions; he would have known the probable failure of such an enterprise. But experience is never foreseen.

The friend who furnished the funds, having lost the security for his loan, and being anxious that my brother should find some business which would give him a chance to pay off the debt, took him to one of his relatives who was making a fine fortune in the printing business. Honoré made due inquiries, sought and obtained the best information, and finally became so enthusiastic over this industry that he determined to become a printer. Books were always his chief attraction. He did not renounce his intention of writing, however; for he remembered Richardson, who became rich through printing and writing both, and he dreamed

of new *Clarissas* issuing from his press. My brother's creditor, pleased with this determination, encouraged it, and took upon himself to obtain the consent of our parents and the necessary money to start the enterprise. He succeeded; my father made over to Honoré, as a portion of his inheritance, the capital of the income for which he had asked as a maintenance while he should give himself to literature.¹

Honoré now took into partnership a very clever foreman, whom he had remarked in a printing-office at the time his first novels were published. This young man, who was married and the father of a family, inspired him with confidence, but, unfortunately, he brought to the partnership nothing more than his knowledge of typography. This knowledge was, of course, lacking to my brother, who thought that the zeal and activity of his partner, combined with experience, were equivalent to capital. Printing licenses were very costly under Charles X.; when fifteen thousand francs was paid for the license, and the necessary material had been purchased, there remained but little money to meet the current expenses of the work. But my brother was not alarmed; youth is always so sanguine of lucky chances! The young partners installed themselves gayly in the rue des Marais Saint-Germain, and accepted all customers who came to them. Payments, however, were slow in coming, and did not balance with the expenses; pressure began to be felt. A splendid opportunity now offered to unite a type foundry with the printing-office. It promised such profits, according to competent authorities whom Honoré consulted, that

¹ The sum is elsewhere stated to have been 30,000 francs.

he did not hesitate to purchase it. He hoped, by uniting the two enterprises to obtain either a third associate with means, or a loan. He did his best in these directions, but all efforts failed, for the securities given to his first creditor had of course the first claim, and brought all negotiations to an end.

My brother, with bankruptcy looming in the future, passed through a period of anguish which he never forgot, and which compelled him once more to appeal to his parents. My father and mother saw the gravity of the situation, and came to his assistance; but after some months of continual sacrifice, fearing that their ruin might follow that of their son, they refused to furnish more money, — at the very moment when, perhaps, prosperity was at hand. This is the history of nearly all commercial disasters.

Honoré, unable to convince his parents that a fortunate result was close at hand, now attempted to sell out; but his unfortunate position had become known, and the offers made were so insufficient that by accepting them he would have to lose all except the honor of his name. However, to avoid an imminent failure, which might have killed his old father and blasted his own young life, he made over the foundry and printing-office to a friend for the price offered to him. In so doing he secured the future of that friend; for his judgment proved to have been sound, and a fortune was made out of the foundry alone. The price obtained being insufficient to pay the whole of the pressing debts, my mother advanced what money was needed for them. Honoré retired from the business weighed down by obligations, — our mother being one of his chief creditors.

It was now the close of the year 1827; our parents had sold their country-house at Villeparisis, and were living near me at Versailles, where Monsieur Surville was stationed as engineer of the department of the Seine-et-Oise. Honoré, then nearly twenty-nine years of age, possessed nothing but debts, and his pen with which to pay them, — that pen, the value of which was still unrecognized. Worse still, every one regarded him as “incapable,” — a fatal epithet which deprives a man of all support, and often completes the shipwreck of the unfortunate victim. This verdict was a direct denial of the sure and rapid judgment he possessed of men and things, — a denial which exasperated him far more than that of his talent — it continued to echo about him long after he had given brilliant proofs to the contrary. Certain of his friends undoubtedly troubled him more than his numerous enemies. Even after the publication of *Louis Lambert* and the *Médecin de Campagne* they said to him: “Come, Balzac, when are you going to give us some really fine work?” In their eyes he was a trifle, a mere writer of tales, not a “serious man,” — a term which impresses the common run of minds. Had he written some weighty book, so learned that few could understand it, they would have felt respect for him. And yet these very persons, inconsistent with themselves, while they deplored the frivolity of my brother’s works, accused him of presumption when he touched upon grave matters in his “little books” and lectured him paternally.

“Why meddle with philosophical or governmental questions?” they said to him; “leave that to metaphysicians and economists. You are a man of imagina-

tion, — we all admit that; don't go outside of your vocation. A novelist is not obliged to be a learned man or a legislator."

Such speeches, repeated under many forms, irritated him greatly; then he would turn with indignation on himself for being wounded by those who did not understand his powers, and his anger redoubled. "Must I die," he said bitterly, "to let them know what I am worth?"

And yet such blindness was not surprising. Those who knew the child long saw him in the man; and it is so difficult to admit superiority in one whom we have always ruled that when forced to grant him some one special faculty we hasten to deny him all others. Besides, his friends argued, is not one such faculty enough for a man? how many men have none at all! Did Honoré pretend to universal genius? Such audacity deserved repression. These friends did not spare him; and it was easy for them to persuade others that with such an imagination as my brother possessed he could have no judgment. The union of the two qualities is, doubtless, exceptionally rare, and Honoré's two commercial disasters seemed to justify this verdict. If I seem to attach importance to opinions which have none whatever to-day, it is because they were thorns in the side of him whose life I am relating. Continually wounded by such injustice, my brother would not stoop to explain or defend his ideas and actions, which it was now the custom to blame without endeavoring to understand them; he went his way alone towards his goal, without encouragement, without support, — a way strewn with the rocks and thorns of his two disasters.

When he attained that goal, that is to say, when fame was his, many there were to cry aloud: "What genius! I foresaw it!" But Balzac was no longer here to laugh at such palinodes, or to enjoy their tardy reparation.

These memories have led me too far, and I return now to the year 1827, the time at which my brother left the printing-office and hired a room in the rue de Tournon.¹ Monsieur de la Touche was his neighbor. He became attached to my brother, but the friendship soon died out, and he was afterwards among his bitterest enemies. Honoré was then writing *Les Chouans*, the first book to which he put his name. Overwhelmed with work he no longer went to see his family at Versailles. Our parents complained of his neglect; and I wrote to warn him of their feelings. My letter must have reached him in a moment of great weariness, for he, so patient and so gentle, answered sharply: —

PARIS, 1827.

"Your letter has given me two detestable days and two detestable nights. I have thought over my justification point by point, as Mirabeau did his memorandum to his father, and I am incensed in so doing. I shall not write it; I have not the time, sister, and besides, I do not feel that I am wrong. . . .

"I am blamed for the furniture of my room; but every piece of it belonged to me before my catastrophe. I have not bought a single thing. Those blue cambric hangings about which such complaint is made were in my bed-chamber at the printing-office. La Touche and

¹ His debts at this time, as he mentions in a letter, amounted to 120,000 francs.

I nailed them up to cover an old paper which must otherwise have been changed. My books are my tools, I cannot sell them. Taste, the thing that makes my room harmonious, is not bought or sold (unfortunately for the rich). But, even so, I care so little for what I have that if my creditors were to put me, secretly, into Sainte-Pélagie, I should be happier than I am now; living would cost me nothing, and I could not be more a prisoner than toil is making me. The postage of a letter, the use of an omnibus are expenses I cannot allow myself; I do not go out, to save the wear and tear of clothes. Is that plain enough for you?

“Do not compel me therefore to make those trips, those visits, which are impossible under my circumstances. Remember that I have nothing left but time and labor with which to make my way; I have no money to meet even the smallest expenses. Think how my pen is never out of my hand, and you will not have the heart to require me to write letters. How can one write with a weary brain and a tortured soul? I should only grieve you, and why should I do that? You don't understand that before my day's work begins I sometimes have seven or eight business-letters to answer.

“Fifteen days more will see me through the *Chouans*; till then, no Honoré; you might as well disturb a founder when the metal is flowing. I am satisfied I have done no wrong, dear sister; if you were to make me think I had, my brain would give way. If my father should be ill you will of course send me word. You know that no human consideration would then keep me from him.

“Sister, I must live without asking anything of any

one,—live to work that I may pay my debts to all. When the *Chouans* is finished I will bring it out to you ; but I do not wish any one to say a word, good or bad, to me about it ; a writer's own family and friends are incapable of judging him. Thanks, dear champion, whose generous voice defends my motives. Shall I live to pay the debts of my heart?"

A few days later I received another letter which I copy, because it shows his nature. Two little screens were wanted for the decoration of the room which had already brought reproaches upon him. He wanted them just as he had formerly wanted his father's Tacitus in the old garret, eagerly.

“ Ah ! Laure, if you did but know how passionately I desire (but hush, keep the secret) two blue screens embroidered in black (silence ever !). In the midst of my troubles that's a point to which my thoughts return. Then I say to myself: ‘ I'll confide the wish to sister Laure.’ When I get those screens I can never do anything wrong. Shall I not always have a reminder of that indulgent sister before my eyes? — so indulgent for her thoughts, so stern for mine. The designs can be anything you like, just what you please ; I shall be sure to think them pretty if they come from my *alma soror*.”

Here he is interrupted by bad news. He tells me his new misfortune with passionate eloquence, and then concludes in two lines:—

“ But my screens — I want them more than ever, for a little joy in the midst of torment.”

The *Chouans* appeared. The work, though imperfect, and needing to be retouched (as it was later by the master's hand) revealed, nevertheless, such remarkable talent that it drew the attention of the public and also of the press, which at first was very friendly to my brother. Encouraged by this first success he returned with ardor to his work, and wrote his *Cathérine de Médicis*. The same withdrawal into solitude, same complaints from his parents, same remonstrance on my part. Feeling content, probably, with his work when my letter arrived, he answers this time in a lively tone: —

PARIS, 1829.

“I have received your scoldings, madame; I see you want particulars about the poor delinquent. Honoré, my dear sister, is a simpleton, who is crippled with debt without having had one single jovial time to show for it; ready sometimes to dash his head against the wall — though some persons do deny that he has any. At this moment he is in his room engaged in a duel; he has a half-ream of paper to kill, and he is stabbing it with ink in a way to make his purse joyful. This fool has some good in him. They say he is cold and indifferent; don't believe it, my darling sister. His heart is excellent; and he is ready to do services to any one, — only, not having a credit with Mr. Shoemaker, he can't go of errands for everybody as he used to do; for this he is blamed as Yorick was when he bought the mid-wife's license.

“In the matter of tenderness he is in funds, and will return the double of what he receives; but he is so constituted that a harsh or wounding word expels all the joy

in his heart, — so susceptible is he to delicacy of feeling. He needs hearts that can love largely, that understand affection, and know that it does not consist in visits, civilities, good wishes, and other conventions of that kind; he carries eccentricity so far as to welcome a friend whom he has not seen for a long time as if they had been together the night before. This odd being may forget the harm that has been done him, but the kindness, never! It should be graven on brass if his heart contained that metal. As for what indifferent people may think, or say of him, he cares as little as for the dust that sticks to his feet. He is trying to be something; and when a man erects a building he does n't care for what idlers may scribble on the scaffolding! This young man, such as I describe him, loves you, dear sister, and these words will be understood by her to whom I address them."

My brother spent the first years of his literary life amid even greater anxieties than those he had borne in the rue des Marais Saint-Martin, through which, in after years, he never passed without a sigh, remembering that his troubles began there. Without his faith in himself, without that honor which commanded him to live to pay his debts, he would certainly never have written the *Comédie Humaine*. He told me that during these years he had, on several occasions, been assailed by temptations to suicide, such as he has given to the hero of that work of youth and power which he named *La Peau de Chagrin*. What bitter griefs, what disappointments of every kind must have been the lot of him who said in his latter years: "We spend

the second half of life in mowing down in our hearts all that we grew there in the first half; and this we call acquiring experience!"

Or this, which is sadder still: —

“ Noble souls come slowly and with difficulty to believe in evil feelings, in betrayal, in ingratitude; but when their education in this matter is accomplished then they rise to a pity which is, perhaps, the highest reach of contempt for humanity.”

If he did not return after his disasters to a garret like that of the rue Lesdiguères, it was only because he knew that in Paris everything is ground for speculation, even poverty: —

“ They would give me nothing for my books if I lived in a garret,” he said to me.

The luxury he affected, and which was so much blamed, and so immensely exaggerated, was a means of obtaining better prices for his work.

My brother, admiring Walter Scott enthusiastically, as much for the ability with which he won and maintained his success as for his genius, thought, in the first instance, of following his example and making a history of the manners and morals of our nation, selecting for that purpose its leading phases. *Les Chouans*, and *Catherine de Médecis*, which immediately followed it, testify to this intention, which he explains in the introduction to *Catherine de Médecis*, — one of his finest books, known to few persons, although it proves to what heights Balzac might have attained as an historian.

He abandoned this project, however, and confined himself to pictures of the manners and morals of his

own time, which he first entitled *Études de Mœurs* — Studies of Manners and Morals — dividing them into series, such as Scenes from Private Life — Country Life — Provincial Life — Parisian Life, and so forth. It was not until 1833, about the time of the publication of the *Médecin de Campagne*, that he first thought of collecting all his personages together and forming a complete society. The day when this idea burst upon his mind was a glorious day for him. He started from the rue Cassini, where he had taken up his abode after leaving the rue de Tournon, and rushed to the faubourg Poissonnière, where I was then living: —

“Make your bow to me,” he said to us, joyously, “I am on the highroad to become a genius!”

He then unfolded his plan, which frightened him a little, for no matter how vast his brain might be, it needed time to work out a scheme like that.

“How glorious it will be if I succeed,” he said, walking up and down the room. He could not keep still; joy radiated from every feature. “I’ll willingly let them call me a *maker of tales* all the while that I am cutting stones for my edifice. I gloat in advance over the astonishment of those near-sighted creatures as they see it rise!” And thereupon this hewer of stones sat down to talk over the building at his ease.

He judged the imaginary beings he created with impartiality, in spite of the tenderness he felt for each.

“*Such an one* is a scoundrel,” he would say; “he will never come to any good. *That man*, hard worker and a good fellow, he will be rich; his nature will always keep him happy.” “*Those others* have com-

mitted peccadilloes, but they have such good intellects and so much knowledge of men and things that they will get to the top of the social ladder."

"Peccadilloes, brother? — you are very indulgent."

"You can't change them, my dear; they sound the abysses for themselves, but they know how to guide others. The wise and virtuous are not always the best pilots. It is not my fault; I don't invent human nature; I observe it in the past and in the present, and I try to paint it such as it is. Mere inventions would n't convince anybody."

He would tell us the news of his imaginary world as others tell that of the real world.

"Do you know who Félix de Vandenesse is going to marry? A demoiselle de Grandville. It is an excellent match, for the Grandvilles are rich, in spite of what Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has cost them."

If we sometimes asked for mercy to a young man who was hurrying to his ruin, or to some poor unhappy woman whose sad fate interested us, he would answer:

"Don't bewilder me with your sensibilities; truth before everything. Those persons are feeble, incapable; what happens to them must happen; so much the worse for them."

But in spite of this imperious talk their disasters did grieve him. One of Doctor Minoret's friends, Captain Jordy, excited our curiosity. My brother had told nothing of his life, and yet many things led us to believe he had met with great trials. We asked him about them. "I did not know Monsieur de Jordy before he came to Nemours," he replied. On one occasion I invented a little romance on the old man's

life, which I told to Honoré (such jokes did not displease him). "What you say may be so," he replied, "and as you are interested in Monsieur de Jordy I will get at the truth about him."

He was a long time hunting up a husband for Mademoiselle Camille de Grandlieu, and rejected all those we proposed for her.

"His people are not in the same society; nothing but chance could bring that marriage about, and chance should be used very cautiously in a book; reality alone justifies improbability; we novelists are allowed only possibilities." He finally chose the young Comte de Restaud for Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, and rewrote for that marriage the admirable history of *Gobseck*, in which the highest morality is to be found in the facts, not in the words.

Like mothers who particularly attach themselves to unfortunate children, Honoré had a weakness for those of his works which had the least success. For them he was jealous of the fame of the others. The universal praise bestowed on *Eugénie Grandet* ended by chilling his regard for that work. When we scolded him for this, "Do let me alone!" he would say; "those who call me 'the father of *Eugénie Grandet*' want to belittle me. It is a masterpiece, I know, but it is a little masterpiece; they are very careful not to mention the great ones."

When the time came for the collection of his works in a compact edition he entitled it *La Comédie Humaine* [The Comedy of Human Life]; a great decision, which cost him many doubts and hesitations. He, usually so resolute, feared he should be thought

too bold. This fear is plainly seen in the noble preface which accompanied the edition. I have never been able to read the close of it without emotion; it was, unhappily, prophetic; he was destined not to finish the work he loved so well.¹ It was at this time that he associated his friends with his work by dedicating to each of them a book, or a tale, of the *Comédie Humaine*. The list of these dedications proves that he was loved by many of our illustrious contemporaries.

From 1827 to 1848 my brother published ninety-seven works; and I may add that he wrote this enormous number with his own hand, without secretary or corrector of proofs. A few facts as to the origin of some of these works may be of interest.

The subject of the *Auberge Rouge* (a true history, in spite of all that has been said about it) was given to him by an old army surgeon, a friend of the man who was condemned unjustly. My brother merely added the conclusion. The novel of "Quentin Durward," which has been so much admired, more especially as an historical tale, angered Honoré extremely. Contrary to the opinion of the world, he thought Walter Scott had strangely misrepresented Louis XI., "a king not as yet understood," he used to say. This anger led him to write *Maître Cornélius*, in which he places Louis XI. on the scene. *Les Proscrits*, written after a profound study of Dante, as homage to that powerful genius, was part of the original scheme I have mentioned. *Un Épisode sous la Terre* was related to him by the gloomy hero of that tale. Ho-

¹ In the American translated series this preface accompanies the volume containing *Père Goriot*,—Vol. I. of this edition.

noré had always desired to see Sanson the executioner. To know what that man, whose soul was filled with bloody memories, thought, — to learn how he himself regarded his terrible business and his wretched life, — was indeed an investigation to tempt him. Monsieur A——, the director of prisons, with whom my brother was intimate, arranged an interview. Honoré went to Monsieur A——'s house, and there found a pale man of a sad and noble countenance; his dress, manners, language, and education might have led others to think him some writer brought there by a like curiosity. It was Sanson! My brother, warned by Monsieur A——, repressed all surprise and repulsion, and led the conversation to the subjects which interested him. He won Sanson's confidence so thoroughly that the latter, carried away by his feelings, spoke of the sufferings of his life. The death of Louis XVI. had caused him all the terrors and remorse of a criminal (Sanson was a royalist). The day after the execution he ordered the only expiatory mass that was celebrated in Paris in those days to be said for the king!

It was also a conversation my brother had with Martin, the celebrated tamer of wild beasts, at the close of one of his exhibitions, which made him write the short story entitled *Une Passion dans le desert. Séraphita*, that strange work which might be taken for the translation of a German book, was inspired by a friend. Our mother helped him to the means of executing it. She was always much concerned about religious ideas, read the books of the mystics, and even collected them. Honoré had seized upon the works of Saint-Martin, Swedenborg, Mademoiselle

Bourignon, Madame Guyon, Jacob Boehm, and others, over one hundred volumes in all, and devoured them. He read almost as others glanced; yet he assimilated the ideas contained in a book. He plunged into the study of somnambulism and magnetism; my mother, eager after the marvellous, supplied him with still other means of study, for she knew all the magnetizers and celebrated somnambulists of the day. Honoré was present at their séances, became enthusiastic over their inexplicable faculties and the phenomena they produced, discovered for those faculties a wider field than they really have, perhaps, and composed *Séraphita* under the impression of such ideas. But recalled by the necessities of life, which did not allow of his writing other books than those that pleased the public, he returned, happily, to the Real, and was detached from metaphysical meditations which might, perhaps, have misled his great intellect, as they have that of others.

Independently of his books, he had a large correspondence on business, together with other letters which took much time. During these years I find many relating to journeys in Savoie, to Sardinia, and Corsica, to Germany, Italy, and to Saint Petersburg and Southern Russia, where he made a long stay on two occasions; not to speak of trips in France to the various localities where he placed or intended to place the personages of his tales, for the purpose of describing faithfully the towns and country regions where they lived. Often, when he came to take leave of us, he would say, "I am off for Alençon to see Mademoiselle Cormon," or "to Grenoble, where Monsieur Benassis lived."

The impossible did not exist for him; and he proved

it in the first instance by finding courage to live through these early years of his literary life, when more than once he deprived himself of the necessaries of life to procure the superfluities, so needful to him in order to occupy a place in the social life he wished to paint. The recollection of those years brings back such anguish to my mind that I cannot think of them even now without sadness. From 1827 to 1836 my brother could not support himself and meet his obligations without drawing notes, the maturing of which kept him in a state of perpetual anxiety; for he had nothing with which to meet them but the profits of his works, and the time in which he could finish each book was uncertain. After getting those notes accepted and discounted by usurers (the first difficulty) he was often obliged to renew them, a second and still greater difficulty which he alone could manage; for others would have failed in negotiations where he could fascinate — even usurers. “What a waste of intellect!” he would say to me, sadly, when he returned, worn out, from these efforts which sadly interfered with his work.

He was unable to prevent the accumulating interest on his principal obligations from rolling up until it made his “floating debt” (as he called it in his gay moments) like a snowball, growing larger as it rolled; this debt so increased with the months and years that there were times when my brother despaired of ever paying it. To pacify the more threatening of his creditors he performed actual prodigies of labor from time to time, which overwhelmed both publishers and printers. This almost superhuman toil was, undoubtedly, one of the causes which shortened his life. A great mental shock

brought on the heart disease of which he ultimately died, but it might not have killed him so early had it not been developed by the over-heating of his blood. This condition of anxiety lasted until the time came for the reprinting of his works, which enabled him to at least partially free himself from debt. With what joy he lessened the figures of that terrible amount, which he kept ever under his eyes so as to stimulate his courage.

“After such toil as this, when shall I have a penny for myself?” he often said to me. “I will certainly frame it; it will be, in itself, the history of my life.”

A few letters of the years 1832, 1833, 1834, 1835, during which he travelled much, will show the condition of his soul far better than I can tell it. They are written from Angoulême, Aix-les-Bains, Saché, Marseilles, and Milan. The books of which he speaks enable me to assign the dates, which are nearly always wanting to his letters. Angoulême was a town where the Carrauds, friends of ours, whom my brother often visited, were then living. (Commandant Carraud was in charge of the government powder-works.) A warm friendship had sprung up between my brother and this honorable family in 1826, when I was living at Versailles. Monsieur Carraud was then director of the military school of Saint-Cyr. I was overjoyed to meet his wife, with whom I had been brought up. Her faithful and intelligent friendship was one of the happinesses of my brother's life. Those of his works which are signed at Angoulême and Frapesle (a country-seat belonging to Madame Carraud in Berry) bear testimony to their deep sympathy.

Saché is a fine estate about eighteen miles from

Tours, belonging to Monsierr de Margonne, a friend of our family. Honoré found there, at all times, the noblest hospitality joined to unvarying affection. With these friends he could have the tranquillity he could not have in Paris. At Angoulême and at Saché he wrote several of his books, more especially *Louis Lambert*, *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, and others I do not now recollect.

“ANGOULÊME, 1832.

“Thank you, sister; the devotion of the hearts we love does us so much good! You have revived the energy which has enabled me, so far, to surmount the difficulties of my life. Yes, you are right; I shall not stop short; I shall advance, I shall attain my end; you will one day see me counted among the great minds of France. But what efforts to attain it! they wear out the body, weariness comes, discouragement follows!

“*Louis Lambert* has cost me such toil! how many books I have had to re-read in order to write this one book! Some day or other it may turn science into new paths. If I had made it a purely learned work it would have taken the attention of thinkers, who now will not even cast their eyes upon it. But, should chance ever place *Louis Lambert* in their hands they will speak of it, perhaps. I believe it to be a fine book. Our friends here admire it, and you know that they never deceive me. Why do you object to its ending? You know the reason why I chose it. You are always timid. This end is probable: many sad examples justify it; did not the doctor himself say that madness is at the door of great minds which overstrain themselves?

“Thanks again for your letter, and forgive a poor

artist for the discouragement which brought it forth. The game begun, I must play boldly ; I must press on. My books are the only answer I will ever make to those who attack me. Do not let their criticisms affect you too much ; they are a good augury ; mediocrity is never attacked. Yes, you are right, my progress is a real one, and my infernal courage will be rewarded. Persuade my mother to think this, my dear sister ; tell her from me to give me the charity of her patience. Such devotion will be counted to her. Some day, I hope, a little fame will repay all. Poor mother ! that same imagination which she bestowed upon me drives her mind from north to south, and from south to north perpetually ; such tossings to and fro are fatiguing ; I know it well myself. Tell her I love her as I did when a child. Tears are in my eyes as I write these lines, — tears of tenderness and of despair. I think of the future ; I must have my devoted mother with me in the day of my triumph ; but when shall I win it ? Take care of our mother, Laure, for the present and for the future.

“As for you and your husband, never doubt my heart. If I cannot write to you be indulgent, do not blame my silence ; say to yourselves : ‘He thinks of us ;’ understand me, my kind friends, you, my oldest and surest affections. Each time that I issue from my long meditations, my exhausting toil, I rest in your hearts as in some delightful spot where nothing wounds me. Some day when my work develops you will see how many hours were needed to think and write so many things ; you will then absolve me for what may now displease you, and you will forgive the egoism, not of the man (for the man has none), but of the thinker and toiler.

“ I kiss you, dear consoler who bring me hope, with a kiss of tender gratitude. Your letter revived me ; after I had read it I gave a joyful hurrah and shouted, ‘ Forward, soldier ! fling thyself boldly into the fray.’ ”

The reader will understand the emotions with which I received such letters as these.

In *Louis Lambert* my brother had felt obliged, in order to bring forward ideas which were not yet accepted, to put them under the safeguard of supposed madness. “ And even so,” he said to me, “ I have not dared to give them all the extension that I see in them.” Louis Lambert asks himself whether the constituent principle of electricity does not enter as a basis into the particular fluid from which Ideas spring. He saw in Thought a complete system, like one of Nature’s kingdoms, a celestial flora, as it were, the development of which by some man of genius would be taken for the work of a lunatic. “ Yes, all things within us and without us,” said Louis Lambert, “ bear evidence to the life of Ideas, — those ravishing creations which, obeying some mysterious revelation of their nature, I compare to flowers.”

My brother returns in several of his works to this subject of meditation. In the *Peau de Chagrin*, among others, he analyzes the birth, life, or death of certain thoughts, — one of the most fascinating pages of that book.

Louis Lambert found in the moral nature phenomena of motion and gravity, similar to those of the physical nature, and demonstrated his opinion by certain examples.

“ The emotion of *expectant attention*,” he said, “ is

painful through the effect of a law in virtue of which the weight of a body is multiplied by its swiftness. Does not the weight of sentiment, the moral gravity, which *waiting* produces, increase by the constant addition of past pains to present pain? To what if not to some electric substance can we attribute that magic by force of which the Will sits majestically enthroned in the eye, to blast all obstacles at the command of genius, or breaks forth in the voice, or filters visibly, in defiance of hypocrisy, through the human cuticle? The current of this king of fluids which, under the high pressure of Thought or Sentiment, flows forth in waves, lessens to a thread, or gathers to a volume and gushes out in lightning jets, is the occult minister to whom we owe the efforts (be they fatal or beneficent) of the arts and the passions, — the intonations of the voice, rough, sweet, terrifying, lascivious, horrible, seductive, which vibrate in the heart, in the bowels, in the brain at the will of our wishes, — the spell of touch, from which proceed the mental transfusions of the artist whose creative hands, made perfect through passionate study, can evoke nature, — the endless gradations of the eye, passing from sluggish atony to the discharge of lightning-flashes full of menace. God loses none of his rights in this system. Thought, material thought tells me of new and undiscovered grandeurs in the Divine.”

I end my quotations; having merely wished to prove what I have advanced. The book alone can enable the reader to appreciate the heights of a spirit so ardent in seeking the solution of questions which occupy the minds of all thinkers. Let us return now to the realities of life and see if the man who in 1840 put the fol-

lowing words into the mouth of Z. Marcas (in a number of the "Revue Parisienne") was capable of judging of men and things:—

“‘I do not believe that the present form of government will last ten years,’ said Z. Marcas. ‘The young blood which made August, 1830, and which is now forgotten, will burst forth like steam from the explosion of a boiler. That youth has no safety-valve in France to-day; it is gathering up an avalanche of rejected capacities and honorable but restless ambitions. What sound will it be that shakes these masses and puts them in motion? I know not; but they will rush like an avalanche on the present state of things and will overthrow it. The laws of ebb and flow rule the generations. The Roman empire had ignored them when the barbaric hordes came down. The barbarians of to-day are *intellects*. The laws of surplus are slowly and dumbly acting all about us. The government is the guilty one; it is not recognizing the two powers to which it owes all. It allows its hands to be tied by the absurdities of the Contrat, and it is now in a fair way to become a victim. Louis XIV., Napoleon, England, were and are eager to welcome intelligent youth. In France youth is now condemned to inactivity by the new legislation, by the fatal conditions of the elective principle, by the vicious theories of ministerial constitution. If you examine the composition of the elective Chamber you will find no deputies of thirty years of age. The youth of Richelieu and of Mazarin, of Turenne and Colbert, of Pitt and Saint Just, of Napoleon and Prince Metternich have no place there. Burke, Sheridan, and Fox cannot sit on its benches. . . . We

may conceive the causes of coming events, but we cannot predict what those events may be. At the present time everything is driving the youth of France to republicanism, because it sees in a republic its probable emancipation; it remembers the young generals and the young statesmen of the past. The imprudence of the present government is equalled only by its avarice. . . . France inferior before Russia and England! France in the third rank! They have given us peace by discounting the future,' he cried, 'but danger is ahead. The youth of France will rise as it did in 1790, and you will perish because you did not ask for its vigor and its energy, its devotion and its ardor; because you disliked young men of ability, and would not win the noble generation of the present day by love.' "

These words, written at a period when the reign of Louis-Philippe was in its highest prosperity, prove that Balzac saw far and judged from heights.

After *Louis Lambert* was finished my brother left Angoulême for Savoie. I find two letters from Aix-les-Bains which may be given; one to my mother, one to me:—

"Aix, Sept. 1st, 1832.

"I have felt the deepest emotion in reading your letter, mother, and I adore you. How and when shall I render, and can I ever render, back to you, in tenderness and comfort, all that you are doing for me? I can, at this time, offer you only my gratitude. The journey which you have enabled me to make is indeed very necessary to me; I was worn out with the labor of writing *Louis Lambert*; I had sat up many nights, and so abused the use of coffee that I suffered pains in

my stomach which amounted to cramp. *Louis Lambert* is, perhaps, a masterpiece, but it has cost me dear, — six weeks of unremitting labor at Saché, and ten days at Angoulême. Now then, perhaps, *certain friends* will think me a man of some value. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for relieving me of the worries of material life; my tenderness for you is not of those that words express. Such unceasing toil as mine must surely be crowned by fortune; I hope for it all the more because I see other talents rewarded. As for fame, I begin not to despair of it.

“Take care of your health, mother; you must live that I may pay you all. Oh, how I would kiss you if you were only here! What gratitude do I not feel for the kind hearts that pull some thorns from my life and smooth my path by their affection; though, forced to struggle incessantly against my lot, I have not always the time to express my feelings. But I will not now let a day go by without your knowing what tenderness this last devotion of yours excites in me. Mothers give birth to their children more than once, do they not, mother? Poor darlings! are you ever loved enough? Ah! could I but reward you some day with happiness, by gratifying your pride, and by my genius, for all the anguish that I have caused you.

“I am in a great vein of inspiration, and I hope to do much work here where I am tranquil. . . .

“A person just starting for Paris will bring you some manuscripts to take to Mame [his publisher]. Tell him he shall have *Les Chouans* re-written in February if he wishes to reprint it.

“I am writing, by way of amusement, some *contes*

drolatiques. Three are finished, and I am satisfied with them. I am also at work to supply the 'Revue de Paris' up to December, and I have articles in my head for January and February, which are really half done.

"Don't be uneasy about my leg. I have taken baths, and the scab is forming. I found a pretty room engaged for me which costs two francs a day. I get my meals from a neighboring restaurant. In the morning an egg and a glass of milk, a breakfast which comes to fifteen sous; dinner at the same rates. So you see, mother, that though you have a son who is rather a dreamer, he is at least economical.

"I press you in my arms and kiss those dear eyes that watch over me."

"Aix, September 15th.

"A word to you, my dearly beloved sister. In the course of my travels I have seen delightful places, I shall perhaps see lovelier still, and I want you to know that none of them can make me forget you.

"From my room I see the whole valley of Aix. On the horizon are hills, the high mountains of the Deut-du-Chat, and the exquisite lake of Bourget. But I must work in the midst of these enchantments. Mother has probably told you that I have to furnish forty pages a month to the 'Revue de Paris.'

"I am now between thirty and forty, dear sister; in other words, in the full maturity of my powers; I must now write on my noblest subjects which ought to crown my work. When I return I shall see if I have enough tranquillity of mind to attempt those great works.

"Mother will have told you that I came near being killed under the wheels of a diligence. I escaped with

an injury to the leg ; but the baths and rest are curing it. Yesterday I was able to drive to the lake. Here I am at the gates of Italy and I fear lest I yield to the temptation of entering them. The journey would not be costly. I should go with the Fitz-James party, which would be most agreeable to me, for they are charming. I should travel in their carriage. All expenses calculated, it would cost a thousand francs to go from Geneva to Rome, and my quarter of that would be two hundred and fifty francs ; I should need five hundred in Rome, and then I would spend the winter in Naples. But as I cannot touch my receipts in Paris, which must go to meet the notes, I should, if I decided to go to Italy, write the *Médecin de Campagne* for Mame at once, and that book would pay for all. I shall never have another such opportunity. The duke knows Italy and would save me all loss of time ; persons ignorant of the country waste much in looking at useless things. I should work wherever I went. In Naples I should have the advantage of the embassy and the couriers of Monsieur de Rothschild, whose acquaintance I have made here, and who will give me introductions to his brother ; my proofs can therefore come regularly and my work will go on as usual. Talk to my mother about this ; and write to me in detail about all of you."

On further calculation the journey to Italy was considered too expensive ; my brother did not allow himself to take it, but returned to Angoulême, where he finished *La Femme Abandonnée*, wrote *La Grenadière* and *Le Message*, and began *Le Médecin de Campagne*,

which he concluded in the rue Cassini, on his return to Paris.

Will the details I am now about to give interest the public? Affection makes me a poor judge of this question. I myself think them fitted to explain this many-sided character, in which the qualities of youth remained so long and resisted so much. This belief and the feeling that they cannot belittle Balzac makes me write down the following recollections fearlessly, one by one, as they come into my mind, remembering that he said himself it was "illusions that helped him to live."

To oblige himself to take the exercise necessary for his health in the midst of such a sedentary life, my brother corrected his proofs either at the printing-offices or at my house. According to the weather (which had great influence upon him), his immediate embarrassments, the difficulties of his work; or the extreme fatigue of sitting up all night, he often arrived scarcely able to drag himself along, gloomy and dejected, his skin looking sallow and jaundiced. Seeing his depressed state, I would try to find the means to draw him out of it. He, who could read thoughts, would answer mine before I spoke them.

"Don't console me," he would say in a faint voice, dropping into a chair; "it is useless. I am a dead man."

The dead man would then begin in a doleful voice to tell of his new troubles; but he soon revived, and the words came forth in the most ringing tones of his voice. Then, opening his proofs, he would drop back into his dismal accents, and say, by way of conclusion:—

"Yes, I am a wrecked man, sister,"

“Nonsense! no man is wrecked with such proofs as those to correct.”

Then he would raise his head; his face unpuckered, little by little; the sallow tones of his skin disappeared.

“By God, you are right!” he would cry. “Those books will make me live. Besides, blind Fortune is here, is n’t she? why should n’t she protect a Balzac as well as a ninny?—and there are always ways of wooing her. Suppose one of my millionaire friends (and I have some) or a banker, not knowing what to do with his money, should come to me and say, ‘I know your immense talents and your anxieties; you want such and such a sum to free yourself; accept it fearlessly; you will pay me; your pen is worth millions.’ That is *all I want*, my dear.”

Accustomed to such illusions, which revived his courage and his light-heartedness, I never showed any surprise at these suggestions. Having invented his fable, he would pile reasons upon reasons for believing it.

“Such men spend so much on mere fancies. A fine action is a fancy like any other, and it would give them actual joy all the time. What a thing to be able to say, ‘I have saved a Balzac!’ Humanity does, here and there, have good impulses, and there are persons who, without being Englishmen, are capable of such eccentricity. I shall meet with one,” he cried; “millionaire or banker, I shall find one!”

This belief established, he would walk up and down the room joyously, flinging up his arms and waving them.

“Ha! Balzac is a free man! You shall see, my dear friends and my dear enemies, how far he can go.”

First, he went straight to the Institute. From there to the Chamber of Peers was but a step, and in he went. Why should n't he be a peer? *Such a one* and *such a one* were raised to the peerage. From peer he became minister,—nothing extraordinary in that, there were plenty of precedents; besides, are not the men who have gone the round of all ideas the ones best suited to govern men? Why should people be astonished at his taking a portfolio?

The minister then sat down to govern France; he pointed out and reformed many abuses. Noble ideas and language issued from his dream. Then, as all was highly prosperous in his ministry and in the kingdom, he reverted to the banker or his millionaire friend who had led him to such honors, wishing to make sure that he, too, was as fortunate as himself:—

“His part will be a noble one in the future; the world will say, ‘That man understood Balzac, lent him money on his talent, and led him to the honors he deserved.’ That will be his glory, whoever else goes without. It is a higher distinction than burning a temple to leave your name to posterity.”

When he had travelled far on his golden clouds he fell back into reality; -but by that time his mind was diverted, and he was half consoled. He corrected his proofs, read them over to us, and departed with a joke at himself.

“Adieu; I am going home to see if my banker is waiting for me,” he said, laughing his good, hearty laugh. “If he is not there I shall find work at any rate; and that’s my true banker.”

His ardent spirit was constantly seeking means to

attain freedom from debt; and these efforts wearied him more than his literary labors.

One day, for instance, he thought he had discovered a substance suitable for the composition of a new kind of paper. This substance was everywhere, — cost less than rags. Here was joy, with many hopes and projects, quickly followed by disappointment, for the experiments did not succeed. We supposed he would be in despair, but we found him radiant.

“How about your paper?”

“Paper! I am not thinking of that. You people have never reflected that the Romans, who knew very little about mines, have left treasures in their scoriae. Learned men in the Institute whom I have consulted think as I do, and I am going to Sardinia.”

“Going to Sardinia? pray how are you going to pay your way?”

“Pay my way? I shall traverse the whole island on foot, with a bag on my back, dressed like a beggar. I shall sear the brigands, and the crows, too. I have made my calculations; six hundred francs will do it all.”

The six hundred francs acquired, he departed, and wrote to us from Marseilles on the 20th of March, 1838: —

“Don’t have any anxieties about me, mother; and tell Laure not to have any. I have enough money, and with due deference to *laurean* wisdom I shall not need any for my return. I have just spent four days and five nights in the imperial of a diligence. My hands are so swollen I can hardly write. To-morrow, Wednesday, at Toulon. Thursday I start for Ajaccio, and eight

days after that will be enough for my expedition. I could get to Sardinia from here for fifteen francs if I went by a trading vessel, but such craft take fifteen days for the trip, and it is near upon the equinox; whereas for — it is true — triple the amount I land there in three days. Now that I am almost there, I begin to have some doubts; but in any case, I could not risk less to have more. I have spent only ten francs on the way. I am in a hotel that makes me shudder, but with baths I manage to get along. If I fail, a few nights of hard work will restore the equilibrium! In one month I can scrape up plenty of money with my pen.

“Adieu, my dear, loved mother; believe that there is far more desire to end the sufferings of those who are dear to me than personal desire for fortune in what I am undertaking. When a man has no capital he can make his fortune only by ideas like the one I am now pursuing. Ever your respectful son.”

It was good to hear him tell, on his return, of the vicissitudes of this remarkable journey. He had had the luck to encounter real brigands.

“And they are pretty good devils outside of their industry,” he assured us; “they told me nearly all I wanted to know. Those fellows take the measure of everything, land and people both: they saw so plainly I was no fish for their net that I believe, God forgive me, they would sooner have lent me money than have asked for it.”

He arrived at Bastia without a sou, but his name when he told it was the signal for an uprising among

the young men of the place. They had all read his books, and were filled with enthusiasm on seeing him. Great joy on his part! "I have a reputation already in Corsica," he said. "Ah! the brave youths, the fine country!" Received and fêted by Monsieur B., inspector of finances, whom he knew, he had won enough money at cards to pay for his return to France, at the very moment when he was going to write to us to send him some; he loved such pieces of luck, which made him think he had a star. But that was not all! this tramping through Sardinia and these buffetings at sea had given him subjects, and such subjects! The last surpassed all the others — unless we unwisely agreed with him; for then he asserted the excellence of the first. He related these new subjects with fire; plan, details, he had them all mapped out. "Pretty to do, is n't it?" he added.

"Do you tell your ideas to everybody?" I asked, rather frightened, for I knew that in the good republic of letters, where everybody wants to be king, they are not over-scrupulous as to rights of property.

"Why not?" he answered. "The subject is nothing, it is the execution that does the thing. Let them try to do Balzac; I defy them! Would thieves know how to work? And if they did, so much the better for the public; I should n't regret it, for I have plenty of other things in my mind. The world is vast, and the human brain is as vast as the world."

The specimens brought back from the mines were submitted to chemists. Time was needed to analyze them; moreover, Honoré was not yet ready to go to Piedmont and ask for a concession of the land; he had, as a pre-

liminary, to satisfy his publishers and earn the money for the journey.

He lived a whole year on this Sardinian fortune, and projects kept pace with it. He flew with outspread wings through a terrestrial Eden, which he arranged to his fancy; he bought the little château of Montcontour which he longed for in Touraine; for, in spite of the indifference his townspeople had shown to him, he loved the land, and wished to end his days there. "Gentle and tranquil thoughts grow in the soul as the vines in its soil," he said of it. There he proceeded to fancy himself resting from toil, living like an oyster in its shell, opening his being to the setting sun. He gilded this country life with the splendors of his mind, and transformed himself into his own Doctor Minoret in the midst of his friends, — the abbé, the mayor, and the justice of peace, — rejoicing in the same green old age which he has given him in *Ursule Mirouët*. But for all that, he said, he intended to guard his mind from growing rusty. He should come every winter to Paris, and have a salon like that of Baron Gérard (which was long the model of all salons, past, present, and to come, for the meeting of artists), and there he should receive, like Gérard, all the celebrities born to fame or to be born. He knew how to honor them properly, for did n't he know just the measure of the respect they deserved? Bah! he would even invite the critics. Yes, it was to be a place of general pacification, and this king in his own right was a hearty good fellow, who knew neither hatred nor jealousy. Then he could return to his solitude, beloved and blessed by all.

Such were his dreams!

But these dreams weighed on the hearts of his friends as much as his hours of depression; for they revealed the burden of his sorrows equally with his sadness. It was only in dreams that he could shake it off; no sooner was he awakened than he shouldered it again.

A year after his trip to Sardinia, my brother, having finished the books pledged to his publishers, and to reviews and newspapers, started for Piedmont to obtain the concession of his mine. Unreserved as ever, he had told the purpose of his journey to the Genoese captain who took him to Sardinia the previous year. The following letter explains how the captain profited by that confidence, to Honoré's detriment.

“MILAN.

“DEAR SISTER, — It would be too long to write all that I will tell you when I see you, which will be soon, I hope. I am, after very fatiguing travels, kept here for the interests of the Visconti family. Politics have so embroiled them that the remnants of their property in this country would have been sequestered without certain efforts on my part which have happily succeeded.

“As to the principal object of my journey, all happened as I expected, but the delay in my coming was fatal. That Genoese captain has obtained a concession in proper form from the court of Sardinia. There is over a million of money in the scoriæ and the lead mines. A house in Marseilles with whom he has an agreement has had the ore assayed. I ought not to have loosened my grip on the enterprise last year, and so let them get before me. . . .”

Being myself absent from Paris in October of the same year, I received the following letter from my brother :

“ Gone without a word ! the poor toiler went to find you and make you share a little joy, and he found no sister ! I torment you so often with my troubles that the least I can do is to write you my little joy. You will not laugh at me, you will believe me, *you* will.

“ I went yesterday to Gérard’s ; he presented me to three German families. I thought I was dreaming ; three families ! no less. One was from Vienna, one from Frankfort, and the third — Prussia, perhaps ; but I don’t rightly know where. They confided to me that they had been to Gérard’s faithfully for one whole month in the hope of meeting me ; and they let me know that beyond the frontier of France (dear, ungrateful country !) my reputation has begun. ‘ Persevere in your labors,’ they added, ‘ and you will be at the head of literature in Europe.’ Europe ! they said it, sister ! Flattering families ! Oh, how I could make certain persons roar with laughter if I told them that. But these were good, kind Germans, and I let myself believe they thought what they said, and, to tell the truth, I’d have listened to them all night. Praise is such a blessing to us artists, and that of the good Germans primed me with courage. I departed, gay as a lark, from Gérard’s, and I am going to fire three guns on the public and on my detractors ; to wit, *Eugénie Grandet*, *Les Aventures d’une Idée heureuse*, which you know about, and my *Prêtre catholique*, one of the finest of my subjects.

“The matter of the *Études de Mœurs* is well under way. Thirty-three thousand francs for author’s rights in the reprints will stop up large holes. That slice of my debts paid, I shall go and seek my reward at Geneva. The horizon seems really brightening. I have begun hard work again. I go to bed at six, directly after dinner. The animal digests and sleeps till midnight. Then Auguste makes me a cup of coffee on which the mind works with a steady flow till midday. After that I rush to the printing-office to take my copy and get my proofs, which gives exercise to the animal, who dreams as he goes.

“I can put a good deal of black on white, little sister, in twelve hours; and after a month of such life there’s not a little earned. Poor pen! it must be made of diamond not to be worn out long ago. To lift its master to reputation (according to the Germans) to enable him to pay his debts to all; and then to give him, some day, rest upon a mountain — that is its task.

“What the devil were you doing so late at M——? Tell me all about it — and tell me too that these Germans of mine are worthy people. A fraternal handshake for Monsieur Canal. Tell him that the *Aventures d’une Idée heureuse* [Adventures of a good Idea] are on the ways. I send you proofs of the *Médecin de Campagne*.”

The *Aventures d’une Idée heureuse* and the *Prêtre Catholique* were never written. The subject of the first of these books was inspired by the ill-luck of a great work with which his brother-in-law, Monsieur Surville, was concerned. Honoré intended, in this book, to write the

history of a good idea useful to all, brought to nought by the individual interests with which it clashed, — thus causing the ruin of a man who had devoted himself to bring it about. The subject under my brother's pen would have been fruitful in observation and in social truths; it would certainly not have been the least interesting of the books comprised in his work.

Prior to the journey to Switzerland and Geneva to which my brother alludes in the foregoing letters, I find another letter which he addressed to me during one of my absences from Paris, which it may be interesting to give here: —

“ I have good news for you, little sister; the reviews are paying me better prices. Hey! hey!

“ Werdet announces that my *Médecin de Campagne* was sold off in eight days. Ha! ha!

“ I have enough money to meet the notes of November and December, which made you so uneasy. Ho! ho!

“ I have sold the reprinting of the books by that rascal R——, Saint A., and other pseudonyms. The sale is made through a third party, who denies the authorship; *for I will never admit it.* But as they are reprinting them in that damned Belgium, which does so much harm, both to authors and publishers, I yield to the necessity of exchanging these books for good coin, and in that way I lessen the mischief.

“ And, finally, Gosselin publishes my *Contes Drolatiques*. *Ecco, sorella!*

“ All goes well. A few more efforts and I shall have triumphed in a great struggle by means of a feeble in-

strument — a pen! If nothing happens to prevent it, I shall soon owe nothing to any one except my mother; and when I remember my disasters and the gloomy years I have passed through, I cannot help feeling some pride in thinking that by dint of courage and of toil I have won my liberty.

“ This thought has made me so happy that the other night I talked of a project to Surville in which you were concerned. I made him build a house close to mine; our gardens adjoined; we ate the fruits of our trees together — I went far! The good brother smiled, and raised his eyes to heaven; there was a world of affection for you and for me in that smile; but I also saw in it that neither he nor I owned our houses as yet. Never mind, projects sustain the courage, and if God grants me health, we will have our houses, my good sister.”

This “ project ” afterwards led him to purchase a piece of ground at Ville-d’Avray, where he built Les Jardies. But the steep slope made the walls unsafe; the property cost more than it ought to have done; and other unfortunate circumstances obliged my brother to sell it. This purchase was also counted against him as a fault.

In the foregoing letter Honoré alludes to the *Contes Drolatiques*, which he said in a former letter he was writing “ for relaxation.” In these stories he intended to follow the transformations of the French language from the times of Rabelais to the present day, and thus impregnate his tales with the ideas of the various epochs.

“It will be with this work as with the *Comédie Humaine*,” he said to us; “the public will not understand its purpose until the work is finished. Until then these stories will only be recreation for artists. In them they’ll find the gayety they are often so much in need of.”

He also thought that if everything else failed these stories might save him from oblivion. The studies he then made of the old French writers led him to regret the desuetude of certain words which had never been replaced. He grieved over their fate as Vaugelas might have done.

“What charming words! don’t they express exactly what they want to say? What artless grace! You find such words only in the infancy of a language. Now a days we have to use phrases to replace them. When I work at the dictionary of the Academy . . .”

And that idea flung him into projects in which the French language became his millionaire. He was apt at such times to get angry with those who found fault with him for creating certain words which he wanted in his books.

“Who has the right to make gifts to a language if not a writer?” he would say; “our language has accepted those of my predecessors, and she will accept mine; my parvenus will become noble in time — which makes all nobilities. However, let the critics yelp over my ‘neologisms’ as they call them; everybody must live, you know.”

CHAPTER V.

EARLY MANHOOD.

IN reading the foregoing portion of Madame Surville's narrative, an impression is left upon the mind that more has been omitted than is told. Those were the years of his youth and early manhood, yet his sister tells us little of his actual life, his thoughts on external things, his relation to them; above all, nothing of the inner man that was formed and being formed within him. If we turn to his correspondence, we find but two letters between the years 1822 and 1828, and those of no interest. It is evident that these omissions are intentional. If it was Balzac's will (as it appears to have been) to withhold his private life and motives and incentives from public knowledge, we can only be glad that he foresaw the gossiping curiosity of a coming literary future, and kept that which was sacred to him from being trailed in the dust. But without attempting to pry into the life which he concealed (in fact there are no means of doing so), it is the right of posterity to judge a man by his utterances; and Balzac's works, into which he put much of himself, together with a few stray glimpses given here and there in his letters of a later date, do throw some light upon his early manhood.

But before passing to these more difficult matters it is well to see if Balzac's life after he left his father's house at Villeparisis and became connected with men and things in Paris, can be reduced to a chronology, however incomplete. All accounts of him are vague in this respect, often skipping years in the narration and returning to them later. But by comparing the different sources of information it is possible to get some connected idea of his outward life.

Balzac himself said in after years: "When I was quite a young man I had an illness from which persons do not recover; nineteen out of twenty die. Dr. Nacquart said, 'If he gets well now he may live a hundred years.' I did get well, and I went to work; I wrote novels for mere study; one to break myself in to dialogue; another to practise description; a third to group my personages, and so on." He frequently alludes to the fact that Dr. Nacquart saved his life. This illness, doubtless the heart disease which he mentions to George Sand in 1831, and to which his sister alludes as the result of a great mental shock, must have occurred during the first of these years of which there is no record.

In 1824-25, the period of his venture as a publisher, we find that he wrote three of the ten novels he never acknowledged, the last of which was issued by Urbain Canel, a publisher of some repute; also three pamphlets, *Le Droit d'Ainesse*, *Une Histoire Impartiale des Jésuites*, and *La Code des Gens honnêtes*. Champfleury, who was employed by the Lévy Frères to collect Balzac's signed writings under the title of *Œuvres diverses*, mentions that throughout the vicissitudes of his life and his many changes of abode, Bal-

zac had preserved a number of boxes (*cartons*) full of youthful writings of little interest, which he had probably never re-read,—the sort of papers which most men tear up at intervals or consign to the flames, but which Balzac had kept from some feeling or association. Among them there was neither correspondence, nor journal, nor any paper serviceable to a biographer; and, curiously enough, many were in verse, for which he had apparently not the slightest faculty. Champfleury says, however, that from the specimens he found it might be asserted that if Balzac had turned his mind to poetry he could have been one of the poets of the epoch, on a level with Victor Hugo and Lamartine. Balzac's own judgment in the matter is probably nearer the truth. It is told that Madame de Girardin, being dilatory in writing a sonnet for *Les Illusions Perdues*, the printer's devil, who had been sent for it in vain, seeing Balzac's extreme annoyance at the delay, said to him, not unnaturally, "Why don't you write it yourself, Monsieur de Balzac?" "Write it myself!" cried Balzac, turning on him; "don't you know, wretched boy, that it is utterly impossible for me to write a sonnet?"

During the two years from August, 1826, to September, 1828, when Balzac carried on the printing business, first alone and then in partnership with his foreman, Barbier, he took all work that came to him, and his name as printer is attached to the following books (among others): the works of Lesage, the third edition of Madame Roland's "Memoirs," the works of Volney, M. de Vigny's "Cinq-Mars," several novels by Zschokke, and an amusing little pamphlet of his own, *Le Petit*

Dictionnaire des Enseignes de Paris. He also printed and published the works of Molière complete in one volume, with an introduction by himself; and he published in the same form, but did not print, the works of La Fontaine, also with an introduction; these Introductions are now among his collected writings. He did not print the edition of La Fontaine, which is an illustrated *édition de luxe*, because the establishment when he bought it was in bad condition, and he had, as we have seen, no money left out of his thirty thousand francs to better it, — scarcely enough, in fact, to carry it on. This was the chief cause of his failure. After he sold the business in September, 1828, it went into hands that could command more capital, became remunerative, and was still in a prosperous condition some years after Balzac's death.

When he left the printing-office in the Marais he took a single room in the rue de Tournon, No. 2, where he must have struggled for a time with the wolf at his door. But the worst had come, and things were about to mend. Outward and material circumstances were still against him, and continued to be so, under various phases, all his life; but at last he had conquered, in some degree at least, his own difficulties of form and construction; he was becoming able, by dint of perseverance and hard work, to present his thought in a manner that satisfied him. He now finished *Les Chouans*, which was published under his own name, by Canel and Levavasseur, in March, 1829. During this time (for he had the habit all through life of making his books long before he wrote them) another book must have lain, inchoate, in his mind, taken from his

own heart and experience, — *César Birotteau*. He knew, none better, the anguish of that upright soul in the very circumstances he has given under the guise of fiction.

Les Chouans was the turning-point of his literary career. He became known. Editors went to him for articles; publishers offered to take his books. The following is a list of the novels and tales written by him during the years 1829 and 1830. They now hold their appropriate place in the *Comédie Humaine*: *El Verdugo*; *La Paix du Ménage*; *Gloire et Malheur (Maison du Chat-qui-pelote)*; *Le Bal de Sceaux*; part of *Cathérine de Médicis*; *Physiologie du mariage*; *Gobseck*; *La Vendetta*; *Étude de femme*; *Une double famille*; *Adieu*; *L'Élixir de longue vie*; part of *Les petites Misères de la vie conjugale*; *Une Passion dans le désert*; *Un Épisode sous la Terre*; *Jésus-Christ en Flandres*.¹

The first fruit of Balzac's dawning reputation was an introduction to Émile de Girardin (then editor of "La Mode"), through M. Alphonse Levassieur, partner of Urbain Canel. M. de Girardin states that Balzac gave him a story entitled *El Verdugo*, which he printed in "La Mode," that periodical being the first to ac-

¹ In an appendix will be found the titles of all Balzac's works of every description, with references to their place in the *Édition Définitive*. These are taken from the one complete and authoritative source, namely: "Histoire des Œuvres de H. de Balzac," par le Vte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, 3me éd. Paris, Calmann Lévy, 1888, — a work which covers the whole ground, and is, while strictly bibliographical, a monument of love, perseverance, and fidelity.

cept his work. This introduction probably did more than anything else to bring Balzac into connection with the literary and other talent of that day. The salon of Madame Sophie Gay, Madame de Girardin's mother, had long been a centre of various interests. It was a refuge under the Empire for stubborn aristocrats, and in later years for the eager young blood of the day, literary and artistic, which was troubled with a sense of its lack of opportunity. In 1830 these interests had the common ground of dislike to the bourgeois dynasty; poets, painters, and musicians, publicists, politicians, and beautiful and brilliant women met in Madame Gay's salon to contribute their part to that intercourse of talents, and do their best to shine. There Balzac, who already knew something of society and of well-bred women in his mother's house, was brought into familiar intercourse with such persons as Victor Hugo, de Vigny, Lamartine, and Frédéric Soulié, Horace Vernet and Baron Gérard, Rossini, then in the fame of his last opera, *Guillaume Tell*, Anber, Meyerbeer, Malibran and Duprèz, the Duc de Broglie and Thiers, Madame Tallien and Madame Recamier in their last years, George Sand in her dawn; also Henri de la Touche, editor of the "*Figaro*," whom Delphine de Girardin called her intimate enemy, together with many younger literary men and journalists of his own age. Every one did his or her share towards the brilliancy of these evenings, among them Balzac, who, on one occasion, read the *Peau de Chagrin* aloud to the company. From this time till his death Madame de Girardin was among his staunchest friends; she did as much justice as could be done in those days to his great powers, and she

stood by him loyally, both in private and in the columns of the "Presse" (her husband's paper), long after Balzac had quarrelled with de Girardin on a business matter, and had ceased to go to her house.

In the same year, 1830, he combined with Émile de Girardin, Victor Varaignes, Hippolite Auger, and Boisle-Comte, to found a weekly paper called the "Feuilleton des Journaux politiques," which was intended to supplement the purely political newspapers, and to be "specially devoted to the presentation and criticism of literary works and art productions." The publication was short-lived, but Balzac contributed many articles to it; also to the "Silhouette," edited by Victor Ratier, and to the "Caricature," a spicy semi-political paper, edited by M. Philippon, and devoted more especially to satirical attacks on the Bourgeois régime. Balzac did much work for it, thus serving an apprenticeship at inner journalism, which he afterwards put to use in *Les Illusions Perdues*, and in his witty pamphlet *Le Monographie de la Presse Parisienne*. He did not like the press, but it was on other than merely personal grounds. "It is not a dynasty, nor a Chamber, nor a system that rules France at this date," he says; "it is a terrible power — Public Opinion. And who are making Opinion? The newspapers. And who make the newspapers? Writers, for the most part third-rate: for great as the mediocrity of Court, Chamber, and diplomats may be, the mediocrity of the writers and proprietors who engineer the French newspaper press (all obscure men without initiative or purpose, used-up by their own engine) is greater still." Later, he admits its power. "I don't like journalism; I may say I hate

it. It is a blind force, sly, malicious, insubordinate, without morality or tradition, without, you may say, an aim. But, at any rate, we have got to bow to it. It is a power, — the power of this century. It leads to all points of the circumference. It is the only power in these days that has the force to overthrow, and, consequently, to set up. Just see what the ‘*Débats*,’ the ‘*Constitutionnel*,’ the ‘*Presse*,’ and even the ‘*Siècle*,’ can do in their several ways. I defy the government to name a minister, or a collector, or an admiral, or a forester without more or less considering the effect it will have on the sensitive skin of the press.” He soon began to tire of the tone of the “*Caricature*,” and to gird against weekly articles in derision of the king and “*le grand poulot*” (the Duc d’Orléans). At the end of ten months he declared he had had enough of it, and that true criticism did not exist in France. All his articles of whatever kind have been collected since his death, and published among the “*Œuvres Diverses*.” He would probably not have sanctioned the publication of all of them under his name; for he practised criticism as he practised novel-writing, to train his hand and feel his way.

At the close of the year 1830 he began to write for the “*Revue de Paris*,” then edited by Charles Rabon, but soon to pass into the hands of Buloz, also editor of the “*Revue des Deux Mondes*.” Thus, in the course of this one year, Balzac was fairly launched upon the surface current of his chosen career.

In May, 1831, he left his poor room in the rue de Tournon, and took a sunny little apartment in the rue Cassini, near the Observatoire, where he remained

eight years. It was the fitting up of this cheerful abode with blue cambric (saved from the printing-office) which drew upon him his mother's reproaches; and even Monsieur Taine cannot refrain from remarking on the love of luxury which lusted for two blue screens made by his sister, presumably to match the hangings. It does not seem a heinous offence worth indicating to posterity, and his sister could little have expected that her innocent story would be so applied; but the charge was a true one. Hard as he worked to pay his debts (always his first object), and poorly as he lived, often going without the necessaries of life, he could not restrain his longing for rare old things of art, and beautiful decorations. George Sand said of him that he was "envious of a *bibelot* and incapable of envying another man's fame;" and this passion, which he was unable to resist, and probably never attempted to, increased his debts and added to the millstone already about his neck. He was aware of his weakness, however, and was wont, at times, to hide his treasures from his friends as well as from his creditors. A catalogue of his rare works of art of all kinds, and a description of his gallery in the Rue Fortunée (his last home) is given in *Cousin Pons*, a book which reveals, no doubt, in the person of the old collector, some of his own methods in obtaining those treasures.

In the rue Cassini he became intimate with two men living in the same house, — Jules Sandeau and Henri de la Touche; the latter was then editing the "*Figaro*," which he chiefly wrote himself. Many years earlier la Touche had brought forward André Chénier, and he was now among the first to advise and assist George

Sand, then his secretary. He was a man of much literary importance, which came to naught owing to the strange capriciousness of his nature. George Sand said of him that he had shown the promised land to others, but was unable to enter Canaan himself. She was just then trying her wings before writing "Indiana," and it was at this time that Jules Sandeau presented Balzac to her. Her account of their acquaintance and her judgment upon him will be given farther on, — the actual words of such contemporaries as George Sand and Théophile Gautier being far more useful to the reader than any synopsis made by others.

From this time on we may see the man of strict honor and integrity applying himself to the payment of his debts and the earning of a competency, the need of which he now began to feel keenly, as he entered more and more into the social life it was his destiny to paint. These were his first objects as seen by the general eye; but there was a higher law within him, namely, the development of his own powers, and nothing was suffered to interfere with it, — neither pressure of outward cares, nor remonstrances of angry publishers, nor temptations of friendship and pleasure (strong in his loving and joyous nature), nor the sense of his incompetency in certain ways of putting into form his thought. He never trifled with his genius, the sacred gift which he recognized as a lad in his cage at Vendôme. He obeyed the inspiration that came to him to train it to its highest service; he cloistered his spirit for weeks and months, wrestling in the silence and solitude of night to bring his great powers within control. There lay his real life; a life of which he gives but few glimpses and no par-

ticulars; a solitary life, possibly typified to his mind by the dress he wore. Scarcely any record is left of it except in the books which issued from its solitude; but they reveal much. A man less sound in body and mind would have had no outward life; his nervous system, as we now say of an overtaxed mind and body, would have broken down; or he would at least have been inert and irritable. But Balzac's healthy and hearty nature came to the fore so soon as the strain was over; no sooner had he touched earth than the giant sprang up refreshed, and took his place among the men and events of the day as if no other life were in his thoughts.

Lamartine gives a portrait of him at this time which is doubtless a true one. He says that he returned to Paris after an absence of years, knowing only that a young writer named Balzac was said to show a healthy originality. He chanced to read a few pages of his writings, which moved him to exclaim, "A man is born to us!" Soon after this he met him at dinner at Madame de Girardin's."

"Balzac was standing before the fireplace of that dear room where I have seen so many remarkable men and women come and go. He was not tall, though the light on his face and the mobility of his figure prevented me from noticing his stature. His body swayed with his thought; there seemed at times to be a space between him and the floor; occasionally he stooped as though to gather an idea at his feet, and then he rose on the points of them to follow the flight of his thought above him. At the moment of my entrance he was carried away by the subject of a conversation then go

ing on with Monsieur and Madame de Girardin, and only interrupted himself for a moment to give me a keen, rapid, gracious look of extreme kindness.

“He was stout, solid, square at the base and across the shoulders. The neck, chest, body, and thighs were powerful, with something of Mirabeau’s amplitude, but without heaviness. The soul was apparent, and seemed to carry everything lightly, gayly, like a supple covering, not in the least like a burden. His size seemed to give him power, not to deprive him of it. His short arms gesticulated easily; he talked as an orator speaks. His voice resounded with the somewhat vehement energy of his lungs, but it had neither roughness, nor sarcasm, nor anger in it; his legs, on which he rather swayed himself, bore the torso easily; his hands, which were large and plump, expressed his thought as he waved them. Such was the outward man in that robust frame. But in presence of the face it was difficult to think of the structure. That speaking face, from which it was not easy to remove one’s eyes, charmed and fascinated you; his hair was worn in thick masses; his black eyes pierced you like darts dipped in kindness; they entered confidently into yours like friends. His cheeks were full and ruddy; the nose well modelled, though rather long; the lips finely outlined, but full and raised at the corners; the teeth irregular and notched. His head was apt to lean to one side, and then, when the talk excited him, it was lifted quickly with an heroic sort of pride. But the dominant expression of his face, greater even than that of intellect, was the manifestation of goodness and kindheartedness. He won your mind when he spoke, but he won your heart when he

Portrait of Balzac.

From a daguerreotype given by Balzac to Gavarni and now in
the possession of M. Nadar, Paris.



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was silent. No feeling of envy or hatred could have been expressed by that face; it was impossible that it should seem otherwise than kind. But the kindness was not that of indifference; it was loving kindness, conscious of its meaning and conscious of others; it inspired gratitude and frankness, and defied all those who knew him not to love him. A childlike merriment was in his aspect; here was a soul at play; he had dropped his pen to be happy among friends, and it was impossible not to be joyous where he was."

During the summers he went into the country, staying chiefly with friends of his family who were also devoted friends of his own: Madame Carraud at Angoulême, Monsieur de Margonne of Saché, near Tours, Madame de Berny at Saint-Firmin. Some of his noblest books were written at Angoulême and Saché. These were pleasures that cost him little, but his first journey into other lands, in September, 1832, was another thing, and it is touching to see the gratitude with which he thanks his mother (in the letter his sister quotes) for affording him that pleasure.

By this time his literary success and his personal qualities had brought him into social life. With the Duchesse d'Abbrantès (better known as Madame Junot), a friend of his sister, he was already intimate. Many of his letters to her, beginning in 1828, are given in his correspondence. They are frank and friendly; at first they relate chiefly to herself and her books, in the publication of which he seems to have assisted; later he tells of his own work and discusses subjects. The tone is sincere and affectionate, and grateful for her regard for him. "The friendship you deign to offer me," he

writes, "is a chimera long sought by me; from my earliest days in college I have desired to possess, not many friends, but a friend (*un ami*). . . . You are unhappy, you say, and without the hope of another dawn; but remember that in the soul are many spring-tides and fresh mornings. Your past life cannot be characterized in language; it is now a memory, and you cannot judge of the future by such a past. How many human beings have renewed their lives and made them beautiful and sweet when farther on in life than you are now. All we are is in the soul; are you certain that yours has had its full development? do you breathe-in air through every pore of it? do your eyes see all they can see?" Of himself he says: "I am old in suffering; you would not guess my age from my lively face. I cannot say that I have had, like you, reverses, for I have always been bowed down beneath a cruel weight. Perhaps this will seem to you exaggeration, a method of obtaining your interest; no, for nothing can give you an idea of my life up to my twenty-third year. I am sometimes surprised that I have nothing now to struggle against but outward misfortune. You may question all about me and you will never gain any light on the cause of my unhappiness. Some there are who die and the physician himself is unable to discover what malady has carried them off."

During these years, beginning with 1831, many women of rank and distinction, as well as others in humble life, wrote to him anonymously, impelled to do so by their interest in his books. "A cloud of letters are still in existence, but they tell nothing; they are

not the letters of women who had a part, either great or small, in his time or in his thoughts." From these must be distinguished the anonymous letters of three women, two of whom had an ultimate influence on his life. His answers to the third (who signed herself Louise) are given in his correspondence. It is characteristic of his nature that although these letters to Louise covered a period of two years, and the lady's name was not revealed to him, yet having on one occasion the opportunity to discover who she was, his delicate sense of honor led him to forego it.¹ Madame Hanska, née Comtesse Rzewuska, who seventeen years later became his wife, wrote to him in 1833, after reading the *Peau de Chagrin*, and signed herself "l'Étrangère." She was a Pole by birth, married to a Russian gentleman owning vast possessions in the province of Kiew, where the family usually resided on an estate named Wierzschownia, which was more like a small principality than the home of private persons. Monsieur Hanski, being very much older than his wife, and greatly occupied with the care of his property, allowed her from time to time to travel without him for the purpose of educating their only child, a daughter. Her intercourse with Balzac, begun by letter in 1833, and strengthened by occasional meetings in Vienna or Switzerland, continued in a friendly manner but with

¹ It must be said, however, that the letters to Louise have an artificial ring to them. The reader cannot help asking how they came to be published. As the lady never made herself known to Balzac, is it likely that she sent his letters to the publishers of his *Correspondance*? Can they have been intended for incorporation with some tale left unfinished among his papers?

some relaxation on his part between 1838 and 1843, the period of Monsieur Hanski's death, after which time it grew closer, and ended in being the abiding and final influence on his life. To his later years the history of what she was to him properly belongs.

The other anonymous correspondent, of 1831, proved to be the Duchesse de Castries, daughter of the Duc de Mailly, a relation of the Fitz-James and the Montmorencys; and all the bluest blood of the faubourg Saint-Germain. She was parted from her husband and lived an artificial life, which was made picturesque by a semi-invalidism caused by a fall from her horse and a consequent injury to the spine. She received her friends lying on a reclining chair in a small salon full of antique furniture, old velvet cushions, and screens of the seventeenth century. She was about thirty years of age; her beauty, more Roman than Greek, was noble and distinguished; her high, white forehead, crowned with auburn hair, and the ruby-colored gown she was fond of wearing made her the living presentation of a portrait by Titian.

There is no doubt that Madame de Castries had a marked influence, though it cannot be called an important one, on Balzac's life. She was of great service to his work, for she brought him into the sphere of the faubourg Saint-Germain, and made known to him its manners and customs, just as Madame Gay and Madame d'Abrantès had been the means of revealing to him the Directory and the Empire. Moreover she affected his imagination and gratified his naturally artistic taste. The journey to Switzerland was made at her suggestion. She was then on her way to Italy

with her brother-in-law, the Duc de Fitz-James, and his wife. Madame Surville has told us that her brother was unable to accept their proposal to go with them to Italy on account of the expense; others have said that the real cause was a rupture between the duchess and Balzac at Geneva, where they parted. This may be, but it would seem from the correspondence that his feelings cooled gradually; they did cool undoubtedly (though not without suffering on his part), so that later, when Madame de Castries evidently wished to replace the intimacy on its old footing, he replied to her curtly, though with courtesy. The *Duchesse de Langeais*, with its admirable sketch of the faubourg Saint-Germain, is, by his own admission, derived from his intercourse with Madame de Castries. In a letter to Madame Carraud, dated from Saché, July 1832, not long before he starts for Aix, he speaks freely of his relations to the duchess:—

“Ah, if they would only have gone to the Pyrenees, I could have stopped to see you on the way; but no, it is decreed that I must climb to Aix in Savoie after one of those aristocratic women whom you, no doubt, hold in horror; the sort of angelic beauty to whom we attribute a noble soul; a true duchess, very disdainful, very loving, elegant, coquettish, and witty,—like nothing I have before seen; a phenomenon of the sort that are fast disappearing,—who says she loves me, who wishes me to stay with her in a Venetian palace (you see I tell you all), and who insists that I am to write nothing that is not for her; one of those women whom we are compelled to adore upon our knees if they choose that we shall do so; and whom it is such a pleasure to

conquer, — the woman of dreams, jealous of everything. Ah! how much better I should be at Angoulême, very sage, very tranquil, listening to the whirr of the mill-wheels, muddying my hands in gathering truffles, learning of you to pocket billiard-balls, and laughing and talking.”

Later he writes from Aix, still to Madame Carraud :

“I came here to find little and much. Much, because I am with an amiable and graceful woman ; little, because she will never love me. Why did you send me to Aix? From my little room I see the whole valley ; I get up pitilessly at five, and work before my window till half-past five at night. My breakfast, an egg, comes from the club. Madame de Castries sends me coffee. She is the type of refined women, more so than Madame de Beauséant. But is not the charm of these women cultivated at the expense of the heart? . . . As I came through Lyon I found the proofs of *Louis Lambert*, and, like a bear, I licked my cub.”

It was during the period of this intimacy that Balzac became, or attempted to become, a man of fashion. He bought horses and a tilbury, and was seen in the Bois wearing handsome clothes and accompanied by a little groom called “Grain-de-mil.” But this extravagance lasted only a year or two. The horses were first sold to save oats, then the tilbury ; but the coat, which was blue with brass buttons, must have lasted longer, for it appears in several of the satirical tales of the day.

The following letters are to Madame de Castries, whom he did not meet personally till March, 1832 :

“PARIS, Oct. 5, 1831.

“MADAME, — Your letter was sent to Touraine after my return, and as I crossed my correspondence on the way I have only just received it. Do not think me guilty of negligence. You attribute so many crimes to me that I must defend myself from the suspicion of discourtesy to a lady, even though she be unknown to me.

“Permit me to use some frankness in replying to your frank attacks, and, above all, accept my sincere thanks for the indirect flattery of your criticisms, for they reveal to me the strong impression my works have made upon you. You place me in the unfortunate position of speaking about myself, and that is the more embarrassing because I address a lady whose age and condition are unknown to me. .

“The *Physiologie du Mariage*, Madame, is a work undertaken in behalf of women. I saw plainly that if, in order to spread ideas looking to the emancipation of women and their higher education, I began in a commonplace manner by announcing my purpose, I should merely be regarded as the ingenious author of a theory that was more or less fanciful. It was evident that I ought to envelop my ideas, and mould them, as it were, in some new form, either bitter or piquant, which should awaken minds and give them reflections to think upon. For a woman who has passed through the storms of life the meaning of my book will be seen to be the attribution to husbands of all the faults committed by wives, — it is, in short, a great absolution. Next, I put forward the natural and inalienable rights of women. No happy marriage is possible if a perfect knowledge of each other's moral nature, habits, and character does

not exist between a man and woman before their union, and I have not shrunk from any of the consequences of that principle. Those who know me know that I have been faithful to that belief from my earliest years. . . .

“ Thus you see, Madame, that I have changed the first crime you charge upon me into a brave effort which ought to have won me some encouragement; but, soldier as I am at the outposts of a future system, I meet the fate of all such sentinels. I am misjudged, misunderstood. Some see only the form; others see nothing at all. I shall die in my idea like the soldier in his cloak.

“ Immediately after writing the *Physiologie* I wrote, in order to develop my thoughts and cast them into young minds by means of striking pictures, the *Scènes de la vie privée*. In that series, full of morality and wise counsel, nothing is destroyed, nothing is attacked; I respect beliefs, even those I do not share. I am simply the historian, the narrator, and never was virtue more held up for reverence than in those pages. And now, Madame, since you oblige me to defend the *Peau de Chagrin*, I shall do it in one word: the work is not yet finished. . . .

“ *Jésus-Christ en Flandres, L'Enfant Maudit, Les Proscrits*, and other of my writings, will prove to you that I do not lack faith, nor conviction, nor charity. I plough my furrow conscientiously; I try to be the man of my subject, and to do my work with courage and perseverance, that is all. The *Peau de Chagrin* is intended to portray the present age, our life, our egotism; this representation of our types has been misunderstood. But my consolation, Madame, will ever be in the sincere

interest that has brought me criticisms made, like yours, in good faith and in a friendly manner. Therefore believe me when I say that your letter, so full of touching sentiments worthy of a woman's heart, is not indifferent to me ; such far-off sympathy thus excited is a treasure, — my only fortune, my purest pleasure. But the pleasure you have given would be greater still if, instead of dwelling chiefly on the necessitated picture of a woman famous for never having loved, you had turned to her who is sanctified through the noblest devotion of womanhood, through her artless love and the rich poetry of her heart. For me Pauline lives — even more beautiful. If I have made her a vision, an illusion, it is that none may possess my secret. . . . ”

“ March, 1834.

“ *Séraphita* is advancing ; she will appear at the end of the month. The work has been crushing, terrible. I have worked, and shall work night and day over it. I have made, unmade, remade it ; and as in Paris ridicule usually takes the place of comprehension, I hope for nothing but a far-off, tardy success. The book will be appreciated in the future, and here and there even now. It will be the book of souls who love to lose themselves in the spaces of the Infinite. There is a chapter, the sixth, the Path to Heaven, which will give me, forever, all truly pious souls.

“ Why do you think I am still in the rue Cassini ? I am nearer or farther from you than that, according to the fancy of the moment. I do not like your sadness ; I should scold you if you were here ; I should pose you on a large sofa where you would sit like a fairy in the midst of her palace, and I should tell you that to live

in this life we must love, and that you do not love. A deep affection is the bread of the soul; when the soul is not fed it weakens like the body. . . .

“ I went out yesterday and saw the two caricatures of me by Dantan. Send to Susse for them, and you will see how droll they are. Next week I sit for my picture to please a painter, who asked to do it, and I weakly consented. All this is very petty, is it not? it seems the more so to one who has risen with the mystics to the skies.

“ The noble figure of womanhood which I promised in the preface, and which piques your curiosity, is half done. The book is called *Le Lys dans la Vallée*. I may be wrong, but I think it will cause the shedding of many tears. I know that in writing it I have shed many myself.”

“October 5, 1835.

“MADAME,— My doctor imperatively ordered change of air; I left all letters behind me, and started for Touraine. On my return I found the two you have written to me, also one from M. le Duc de Fitz James.

“ Have the kindness to present to the duke my thanks for his friendly invitation, and my regrets that I cannot accept it. I have plunged back into work necessitated by pitiless obligations. The bell has sounded in my cloister, and I must finish, for the ‘Revue,’ the painting of a feeling so great that it survives all shocks; it comes from a spring whence man, the ungrateful, is ever drawing, yet never draining its source.”

His life-long and, possibly, truest friend was Madame Carraud, *née* Tourangin, the wife of Commandant Car-

rand, the head of the military school at Saint Cyr, and afterwards in charge of the government powder-works at Angoulême. She was the intimate friend of his sister, and about six years older than himself. He speaks of her, judging from a social point of view, as a brilliant mind and noble heart, running to waste in the narrow sphere of Angoulême. To her he went for rest and sympathy; she sustained his mind in its darkest moments, a service he never forgot, and fearlessly advised or rebuked him as her true affection and sound judgment dictated. After the events of July, 1830, she and her husband, with other influential friends, were anxious that he should be chosen deputy at the coming elections. He allowed his name to be put up both at Angoulême and at Cambrai, but was not elected at either place. Some of his letters to Madame Carraud are therefore on politics. The following was written, it must be remembered, when France was just beginning to try one of her many experiments on the body politic.

“ November, 1830.

“ The country is now in very serious circumstances. I am alarmed at the struggle before it. I see passions everywhere, and reason nowhere. If France is convulsed I shall not be among those who refuse to give her their arms or their talents, however much some friends may oppose it.¹ It is at such times that science and knowledge, the resources of which we have pushed so far, together with courage, ought to make France triumph. But even then what is to be the upshot of it

¹ He is speaking as a legitimist, and refers to friends who hold the same opinions.

all? Can we quell the uprising of injured interests which are now within the body politic? Ah, the number of patriots in whom there is no patriotism is great indeed. None are willing to unite patriotism with moderate principles, the constitutive plan of which I have already explained to you. We stand between the ultras of liberalism and of legitimacy, who will unite only in overthrowing all.

“Do not accuse me of want of patriotism, because my intelligence forces me to take the exact measure of men and things. The genius of government lies in bringing about a fusion of extremes. That is what Napoleon did, also Louis XVIII., — both men of talent; one never understood, the other understood by himself only. Each held all parties in hand, one by force the other by craft. To-day we have, for our sins, a government without a policy. This is a state of things to ruin us. Every day it deprives me of some hope. Therefore, you see, I am for the consolidation of interests. If you were in Paris, in the midst of men and circumstances, your *solitude politics* would soon change. You would not be here a minute without a shock. . . .

“I own to you frankly that I cannot conceive how any one can expect a representative government to exist without the differences of opinion which are the basis on which it rests. The tempest that is blowing to-day will always blow. You are supposing the natural action of the present government to be its misfortune. Now, without wishing to defend my ideas, let me tell you in a few words the system of government to which my whole life is ready to subscribe. It is the profession of a faith that is unalterable and quite possible of ac-

complishment ; it is my political conscience, my scheme and my thought, to which I have as much right as others to whom I give the same liberty of opinion. My political life will be entirely devoted to the furtherance of such thoughts, and to their development. When I speak seriously on the future of my country there is no word or writing of mine that is not imbued with these principles.

“ France ought to be a constitutional monarchy, with an hereditary royal family, and a chamber of peers endowed with extraordinary powers, representing landed property, etc. ; with all possible guarantees for hereditary rights and for privileges, the nature of which should be discussed. Then there should be a second chamber, elective, and representing the interests of the intermediate masses which stand between the highest social positions and what we call the People. The body of the laws and the spirit of them should tend to enlighten *to the utmost* the People, that is, persons who own nothing, workmen, proletaries, etc., so as to advance them as soon as possible into the easy circumstances of the intermediate class. But, while so doing, the People should be kept under a powerful control, so that its individuals may be able to find light, help, and protection ; and that no ideas, no combinations or intrigues should make it turbulent. The greatest liberty should be given to the upper class, for it has much to preserve and all to lose, and cannot therefore become licentious. The government should have all possible power. Thus, the government, the upper class, and the middle class have each an interest in making the lowest class happy and able to rise into the middle class, in which lies the

real power of all States. If rich men, the hereditary occupants of the upper chamber, growing corrupt in morals, give rise to abuses, we must remember that abuses are inseparable from the existence of society itself; they must be accepted with their concomitant benefits.

“That is my plan, my thought; it unites the good and philanthropic conditions of several systems. Persons may laugh at me and call me a liberal or an aristocrat; I shall not give up that system. I have meditated long and deeply on the institutions of society; this system appears to me — not the best, but — the least defective.”

The period when Balzac in early manhood came upon the scene of political events was just before and after the Revolution, if it can be called such, of July, 1830. He considered himself connected with the old régime through his family, his father having been secretary of the Council under Louis XVI.; but besides this general bias, he had that of a strong personal belief in authority, and in the duty of maintaining it. He believed in two great vital powers for the control of mankind, and he thus expresses his belief in the Preface to the *Comédie Humaine*:—

“Christianity, and especially Catholicism, being (as I have said in the *Médecin de Campagne*) a complete system for the repression of the selfish interests of mankind, is the strongest element of the social order. If we study carefully a representation of Society moulded, as it were, upon the living form, with all its good and all its evil, we shall find that while thought — or rather

passion, which is thought and feeling combined — is the social element and bond, it is also an element of destruction. In this respect the social life is like the physical life: races and men attain longevity only by the non-exhaustion of the vital force. Consequently, instruction, or, to speak more correctly, religious education, is the great principle of the life of Society, the only means of diminishing the total of evil and augmenting the total of good in human life. Thought, the fountain of all good and of all evil, cannot be trained, mastered, and directed except by religion; and the only possible religion is Christianity, which created the modern world and will preserve it. From it sprang the need of the monarchical principle; in fact, Christianity and monarchy are twin principles. As to the limits in which both should be held and regulated lest they develop to their inherent conclusions, this brief preface is not the place for such discussion. Neither can I enter upon the religious and political dissensions of the present day. I write by the light of two eternal truths — religion and monarchy: two necessities proclaimed by contemporaneous events, and towards which every man of sound judgment will endeavor to bring back this nation.”

Such were his principles; and he believed they would best promote the welfare of those for whom his sympathies were strongest, — the poor and the defenceless. No man has ever shown more feeling for those oppressed by fate or circumstances than Balzac; he wrote of their helpless sorrows with the red blood of his heart. No matter how sternly he exposed their vice and their shortcomings, we see that his sympathies are with them, — not

in a weak and commiserating way, but with comprehension of the causes which make them what they are, and the most earnest belief that his political creed would best lift up and rescue them. He may be right, but in his as in all creeds there is one element not duly allowed for,—human nature. Balzac had no leaning at all to the visionary beliefs and projects of the restless young minds of the day, heirs to ideas repressed by the strong hand of Napoleon and kept under by the Restoration. In 1830 they saw, or believed they saw, their opportunity. While despising the Orléans régime and laughing at the king and his personal submissions, they made themselves feared in the press in a short-lived way. With them and their ideas Balzac had no sympathy. He hated their theories and their socialisms, and, above all, what he called their “experiments on millions of ignorant and excitable natures.” It is well, perhaps, that he was not able to carry out his desire to add the title of a great citizen to that of a great writer. In this best of all possible worlds politics require politicians, and he could never have reduced either his clear-sightedness or his tongue to its hypocrisies. “France,” he said, “is being saved and lost perpetually. If she wants to be saved indeed, let her go back to the laws of God. I tell you I know those laws; under one régime or under another you will have to come back to the law of laws,—unity of will.”

The following letters are still to Madame Carraud:—

“June, 1832.

“As for politics, have faith that I shall conduct myself under the inspiration of a high and stern sense

of right ; and, in spite of Monsieur Carraud's anathema on journalists, believe that I will never write or act except under conviction. My political life and ideas will not be understood in a moment. If I have ever a part in the government of the country I shall be judged later, and I am not afraid. I care more for the esteem of a few persons — among whom you hold the first rank as one of the finest minds and most elevated souls I have ever known — than for the estimation of the crowd, for which, to tell the truth, I have profound contempt. There are promptings, however, which we must obey ; something irresistibly impels me to seek fame and power. It is not a happy life. Within me is the worship of woman, and a need of love which has never yet been completely satisfied. Despairing of ever being loved and understood by the woman of whom I dreamed, never having met her but under one form, in my heart, I desire to fling myself into the whirlpool of political passions as I have done into the lurid and parching atmosphere of literary ambition. I may fail in both, but, believe me, if I do seek to live in the life of the century, instead of passing through it obscure and happy, it is precisely because pure and unpretending happiness has failed me. Yes, you are right in all you say. If I met with a woman and a fortune I could resign myself very easily to domestic happiness ; but where am I to find her ? what parents will believe in a literary fortune ? It would fill me with despair to owe my future to a woman I did not love. Believe that in the desert of my life such friendships as yours, and the certainty of finding an asylum in a loving heart are the sweetest consolations that

could be given to me. My strongest desire is for a country life, — but always with good neighbors and a happy home. In whatever land I could obtain this I would take it; I would do no more literature, except as an amateur, to please myself and not become inactive — if indeed one ever could be idle with trees to plant and to look at. To devote myself to the happiness of a woman has been my ceaseless dream; and I suffer because I have not realized it; but I cannot conceive of love and marriage in poverty.”

“ March, 1833.

“ I live in an atmosphere of thoughts, ideas, conceptions, plans, and labors, which jostle and boil and sparkle in my head till I am half crazy. But nothing reduces my flesh; I am the best portrait of a monk ever seen since the earliest days of monasteries.

“ As for my soul, it is profoundly sad. My work alone enables me to live. Is there no woman for me in this world? Must I drop from such crushing toil to nothing? Shall I never have beside me the tender and caressing spirit of woman, for whom I have done so much? ”

“ August, 1833.

“ You are right, dear, noble soul, in loving Madame de Berny. In each of you are striking resemblances of thought, — the same love of the right; the same enlightened liberality, same love of progress, same desires for the good of the masses; same elevation of soul and of thought, the same delicacy in your natures. And for that I love you much.

“ The *Médecin de Campagne* will reach you next week; it has cost me ten times the work that *Louis*

Lambert did. There is not a sentence, not an idea, which has not been viewed and reviewed, read and re-read and corrected; the labor was frightful. I may now die in peace. I have done a great work for my country. To my mind it is better to have written this book than to have made laws or won battles. It is the Gospel in action."

"October, 1833.

"Do you know how the *Médecin* has been received? By a torrent of insults. The three newspapers of my own party which have spoken of it have done so with the utmost contempt for the work and its author; the others I don't know about. But I do not mind it much; you are my public, — you and a few choice souls whom I desire to please, but you above all, whom I am so proud to know; you whom I have never seen or listened to without gaining some good; you who have the courage to help me in pulling up the weeds in my garden; you who encourage me to perfect myself; you who resemble the angel to whom I owe all; you, so good to my *badnesses!* I alone know with what rapidity I turn to you and seek for your encouragement when some sharp arrow has wounded me; I am like the ringdove, seeking its nest. For you I feel an affection like none other; one which can have no rival and no counterpart. It is so good to be near you! From afar I can tell you all that I think of your soul and of your life without fear of being silenced. God knows there is no one who desires that your path here below be happy more than I do; would that I could send you the joys you need, just as my heart sends up its ardent prayers for your happiness. Yes,

think that in this volcanic Paris there is a being who thinks often of you and of all that is dear to you; who would gladly put away from your life whatever may trouble it; who appreciates you at your true value, — a being with a heart ever young and full of sincere friendship for you, a heart that shows its real self to none but you, and a few of those women who can understand sorrows.”

“ December, 1833.

“ I have nothing to say against your criticisms on *Eugénie Grandet* except that facts are against you. There is a grocer at Tours who keeps a shop and has eight millions. M. Eynard, a pedler, has twenty; he was known to keep thirteen millions in gold in his house. He invested them in the public funds in 1814, and now has twenty millions. However, in the next edition, I will lower Grandet's fortune by six millions, and I will answer the rest of your criticisms at Frapesle. Meantime I thank you for them; but nothing can tell you how grateful I am for the maternal care which your remarks prove to me.

“ Yes, count upon it, I am going to Frapesle, and I hope that I can persuade Madame de Berny to accompany me. On my return here yesterday I found her so ill that I was seized with a panic; my mind is full of anguish. Her life is so much to mine. Oh! no one can form a true idea of that deep affection which has sustained all my efforts, and comforts all my pains at every moment. You know something of it, you who understand friendship so well, you who are so kind and affectionate. As soon as I am relieved of anxiety I will write you again. My *Séraphita* is already far ad-

vanced. The fiasco of *Louis Lambert* and the *Médecin de Campagne* grieved me; but I have chosen my path; nothing shall discourage me."

"—, 1834.

"Germany has bought two thousand copies of the pirated *Louis Lambert*; France bought only two hundred of the real one! And yet, I am writing *Séraphita*, a work as much above *Louis Lambert* as *Louis Lambert* is above *Gaudissart*,—which I am told did not please you. We will talk about that. It is written that I shall never have complete happiness, freedom, liberty, except in perspective. But, dear, I can at least say this, with all the tender effusions of my heart,—that in the course of my long and painful way, four noble beings have held out their hands to me, have encouraged, loved, and pitied me; that yours is one of those hearts which have the unalterable privilege of priority over all my affections; in the silent hours when I look within me, the thought of you brings me rich memories. Yes, the egoism of poets and artists is a passion for art which holds their feelings in abeyance. But you have ever the right to claim me; all I have is yours."

"November, 1834.

"None of my friends realize how my work grows; I now need eighteen hours a day for it. Also, I am trying to evade the national guard duty, which would kill me; and so I have done as the painters do, invented pass-words, which are known only to such persons as seriously want to see me."

"December, 1835.

"Never has the torrent which bears me onward been so rapid; no more terribly majestic work has

ever compelled the human brain. I go to my toil as a gambler to cards. I sleep only five hours, and work eighteen; I shall end by killing myself—but the thought of you refreshes me sometimes. In another year I may reasonably hope to be out of debt; the happiness of owing nothing, which I thought impossible, is no longer a chimera. I shall pay my debts and buy La Grenadière. Another article in the ‘*Revue*,’ like the *Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées* (which appears in February, 1836), will bring me eight thousand francs. God grant that my fame be not mere reputation, and that reputation a fashion, and that fashion fleeting!”

“LES JARDIES, near Sèvres (Seine-et-Oise), —, 1838.

“This is my address for a very long time, thrice dear one, for my house is almost finished, and I am already living in it. Three rooms, one above the other: salon on the ground-floor, my bedroom above that, my study on the upper floor, — all three communicating by means of a ladder to which is given the name of staircase. Such is the abode of your friend. Around it is a walk which winds over an acre of ground inclosed by walls, where trees and flowers and shrubs cannot be planted till next November. Then, about sixty feet away, is a detached building containing stable, coach-house, kitchen, etc., one large room, and others for the servants. Such is Les Jardies. This parrot’s perch on which I roost, with its tiny garden, and the servants’ quarters, is situated near the middle of the valley of Ville-d’Avray, but in the township of Sèvres behind the park of Saint-Cloud. It stands on the hillside, and faces south, with the loveliest view in the world; it has

a pump which is some day to be hidden by clematis and other climbing-plants, a pretty brook, a future world of *our* flowers, silence, and — forty-five thousand francs to pay for it! You understand. Yes, the folly is done, completed! Don't talk to me about it. I have got to pay for it, and so I am beginning to sit up all night.

I have been to Sardinia, and I am not dead. I found the twelve hundred thousand francs I divined were there, but a Genoese had got hold of them by a *biglietto reale* only three days before my arrival. I had a sort of vertigo, and that ended it. You shall hear all about my journey when we meet. It is curious enough, I can tell you."

• "LES JARDIES, March, 1839.

"Dear, what you ask is absolutely impossible; two or three months from now nothing would be more easy. To you, sister of my soul, I can confide my last secret; I am in the depths of misery. All the walls of Les Jardies are crumbling down, through the builder's fault; he has not put any foundations; and this disaster, though he alone is to blame, falls on me to repair, for he does not own a sou, and I had only paid him eight thousand francs on account. Do not call me imprudent, *cara*, I ought to have been rich by this time; I have done miracles of work, but all my intellectual walls have toppled over now, together with the stone ones. I have come down like a foundered horse, — I need to go to Frapesle to rest myself."

In these letters we find Balzac's first mention of Madame de Berny, whom he regarded as the guardian angel of his life. He must have destroyed all letters

and papers addressed to her, so that the sacredness of their intercourse might not be exposed to curious eyes. Like Madame Carraud, she was the friend of his family, and some years older than himself. Her husband was Monsieur Alexandre de Berny (to whom *Madame Firmini* is dedicated). They lived on a small estate at Saint-Firmin in the Seine-et-Oise, spending part of the year in Paris or its neighborhood. During the time the de Balzac family were at Villeparisis, the de Bernys had a house there, and this was the beginning of their intercourse. As no written record of Balzac's friendship with Madame de Berny exists which connects it in any definite way with the outward events of his life, it is best to leave all further mention of that affection until the end, when we may be more able to judge of its influence on his life.

CHAPTER VI.

LITERARY LIFE.

DURING the thirteen years from 1830 to 1842, Balzac being then thirty-one to forty-three years of age, his great work was done. There are signs in 1843 that his health was beginning to fail; he could not force himself to work as he once did; periods of stagnation began to set in, although at times he recovered his full vigor, and three of his greatest works were written during the last eight years of his life, — namely, *Les Paysans*, and *Les Parents Pauvres: Le Cousin Pons*, and *La Cousine Bette*.

His external literary life was not a happy one. He had many publishers, and did not continue on good terms with any of them. It is obvious to those who look back upon the history of these troubles that they were, in the first instance, the natural and unavoidable outcome of Balzac's method of work, and the clash of interests that resulted from it. There cannot be a doubt that Balzac was a thorn in the flesh of his publishers. We have only to read Théophile Gautier's account of his manner of correcting proof — or rather of hammering out his ideas on the anvil of ten proofs, the sparks of his corrections flying wildly about them — to feel that the flesh and blood of printers and publishers could hardly bear the trial. Werdet (who bought up

the interests of other publishers in 1834, and was his sole publisher till 1837) says that the difficulty with proofs "was at the bottom of his troubles with publishers and editors, who were forced to pay the enormous costs of correction." This statement is not strictly true, for Balzac mentions more than once in his letters that he has had to pay over a thousand francs for proof-corrections; and he specially mentions the liberality of Madame Bechet (Werdet being at the time her business manager), who assumed four thousand francs for corrections which were justly chargeable to him. But, in any case, the trial of printing for him must have been great, and he tells himself how, entering a printing-office unexpectedly, he overheard a compositor exclaiming: "I've done my hour of Monsieur de Balzac; who takes him next?"

Another cause of annoyance to his publishers was Balzac's delay in supplying manuscript. He would not let anything go from him until he felt it was the best he could do; the conscience of his work was before all else, and his mind refused to be forced to finish a book to order. "I am ready," he says, replying to Alphonse Levavasseur, who had been more than usually urgent, "to send you the copy on the 15th; but it will be the most infamous murder of a book that was ever committed. There is in me a feeling, I don't know what it is, which prevents me from consciously doing wrong. The question here is the future of a book,—am I to make it unworthy trash, or a work for the shelves of a library? The copy is lying there on my desk, but I am stopped short by a sketch to complete, an idea to develop, by— but it would take me till

morning to explain how that work hangs between success and a gibbet at every page. You must not think this letter an excuse. I do work as hard, and in as concentrated a way, as any human creature could do; but I am the very humble servant of inspiration, and the vixen has her moments of ill-humor."

He was in the habit of carrying on several works at a time, apparently resting his mind by turning from one to another, and taking each up as he felt himself inspired with its subject. Some of these books being in course of current publication in reviews and weekly papers, such delays were, of course, a fruitful source of quarrel and complaint.

If we are to believe Werdet,¹ Balzac sold the right to publish his books under certain invariable conditions, namely: those issued periodically in reviews were controlled by the editors during publication and for three months after the date of the concluding number; those issued in book form belonged to the publishers for one year only. There is evidence that his rights over his books were strong and lasting. He held a different position towards publishers from that of writers in the

¹ Nine years after Balzac's death Werdet published a book about him: *Portrait intime de Balzac; sa vie, son humeur, et son caractère*; par Edmond Werdet, 1 vol., Silvestre, Paris, 1859. It is worth reading by those who understand Balzac, for its comical malignity. If the particular charge which Werdet brings against him be carefully read, the dates collated, the whole brought within compass, and stripped of Werdet's malicious diffuseness, it will be found that Balzac behaved justly and with forbearance, and that Werdet's real grievance was that in a moment of temper he killed the goose that gave him golden eggs, and was taken at his word.

present day, who seem to be the hirelings of capitalists. According to French law, after a book was in type it could not be printed without a written order (*bon à tirer*) from the author; neither could it be published without the same. The publisher was in fact the author's business agent; making his profits, but not controlling the property. The accounts were open to both parties, and when the time for settlement came author and publisher went over the books together and settled the business (see Werdet). This appears to have been the usual method of publication, thus placing the author in an honorable position towards his work and towards the public; and French law, which has thrown many safeguards around an author, protected him in it. Balzac was a strong stickler for his rights, and when he thought them infringed he appealed to the law, which he had at his fingers' ends.

Nowhere among the multiplicity of statements on the money affairs of his books do we find a clear account of the money he derived from them; in fact, his methods of publication were so involved that it would be impossible to discover the profits of each book. Werdet carefully keeps back, in his wordy narrative, the sums he paid to Balzac, and his own profits, but he mentions that the second edition of the *Médecin de Campagne* was sold in eight days, *Le Père Goriot* in six, and *Séraphita* before the book was published, with two hundred and fifty copies promised; and he says, in a rather casual way at the close of his book, "I estimate at 450,000 francs, at least, the sum which Balzac derived from the profits of his books up to the time of our rupture (1838). I could give the details,

but that might seem useless. To this already large sum must be added the product of his other works, published from 1838 to the time of his death." Léon Gozlan differs wholly from this estimate, and says that during the first half of Balzac's literary life his work was not lucrative, and that if we exclude the returns of two or three fortunate books, the average of his literary profits during his whole life did not exceed ten or twelve thousand francs a year. This is undoubtedly a blunder which can be disproved by Balzac's correspondence. The real truth probably lies between the statements of the two men, who both wrote from a *parti pris*.¹

The events of July, 1830, were injurious to publishing interests, owing partly to the stringency of money and the stoppage of all credit for three years. Authors and publishers suffered much from it, and also from the pirated editions which now began to appear in Belgium. Balzac mentions in a letter that two thousand copies of one of his books had been sold in Brussels against two hundred in Paris. The same wrong was also committed in the provinces of France, where, on one occasion, ten thousand copies of M. de Lamennais's

¹ Balzac intime; en pantoufles et chez lui, par Léon Gozlan, 1 vol., Librairie Illustrée, Paris, no date, — the work of a man who saw only one limited side of Balzac, and exaggerated that for the purpose of writing a smart book. Monsieur Marcel Barrière tells us, in his able commentary on Balzac, that foreigners at first appreciated Balzac better than the French, who need, before all things, *esprit*, in which, he says, Balzac was lacking. For this reason, perhaps, Frenchmen may read Monsieur Léon Gozlan's book with more interest than a foreigner, to whom it seems a torrent of rather vulgar and very self-conscious writing, in which Balzac himself is lost.

“Paroles d’un Croyant” were printed and sold without the writer’s knowledge. This wrong led Balzac to seek admission to the Société des Gens-de-lettres, then a comparatively weak body, which somewhat resented, it appears, his hitherto slight appreciation of it and now feared to be involved in his struggles with publishers. This feeling lasted but a short time, and later in the same year he became its president. His inspiring presence instantly gave impetus to the Society, owing to his accurate knowledge of the business of publication, his rare ability in maintaining an author’s rights, and, more especially, his profound conviction of the dignity of a man of letters.¹ In the autumn of 1841 Balzac resigned from the Society, owing to disagreements on a committee he had himself appointed. This committee was charged to prepare a manifesto which should cover the whole ground of the condition of French literature, its right to be considered a power in the State, the service it had rendered to the nation and to history throughout all time, the slight protection, or even decent good-will, which the present government afforded it, and the danger and the shame to France of allowing such a state of things. The Société des Gens-de-lettres proposed to present this manifesto to the two Chambers, and to scatter it broadcast through the country, in order to obtain support. But the committee

¹ Those who are interested in the protection of literature should read Balzac’s articles which were written in the service of the Society, viz : *Code Littéraire*; *Notes sur la propriété littéraire*; and *Lettre aux Écrivains Français du XIX siècle*. They will be found in the *Œuvres complètes de H. de Balzac*. Édition définitive. Calmann Lévy, Paris.

were unable to agree on the terms of the document, and Balzac, with one other member, resigned from the Society, doubts having been thrown on their impartiality.

Literature under Louis-Philippe received but slight encouragement. The king, common by nature, sought only to ingratiate himself with the bourgeoisie, and knew and cared little about writers, except as they supported him or made him fear them in the press. Material interests, solid wealth, limited to the interests of its acquisition, ruled the day; the minds that ruled the world, and gave it posterity were, as now, in the position of underlings. "These stupid kings," cried Balzac to Victor Hugo, "ignore the fact that without us the world would know nothing about them. The very monuments they put up to their own memory crumble away; the pictures they hang in their museums to show the world what they do that is useful and grand don't last; not one is over five centuries old. Without Virgil and Horace and Titus Livius and Ovid, who could distinguish Augustus from all the other Augustuses, though he was the nephew of Cæsar? If it were not for that little lawyer without a brief, Suetonius, we should n't know three Cæsars out of the dozen he wrote about; without Tacitus we should confound the Romans of his time with the northern barbarians; without Shakspeare all the life of the reign of Elizabeth would disappear; without Racine, Corneille, Pascal, La Bruyère, Saint-Simon, Molière, Louis XIV., reduced to his wigs and his mistresses, would be no better than a crowned head on a sign-post; and without *us* Louis-Philippe's name would n't be better known to posterity than

that of Philippe who keeps the restaurant in the rue Montorgueil.”

An amusing account is given by Champfleury of Balzac's last meeting with men of letters. It took place after the Revolution of 1848, when Balzac chanced to be in Paris for a few weeks on his return from Russia. It does not come within the chronology of this chapter, but as it is allied to the subject of governmental recognition of literature an abridgment of Champfleury's narrative may be given here.¹

In May, 1848, M. Ledru-Rollin, being then minister of the Interior of the new republic, put an official notice in the newspapers inviting literary men, *gens-de-lettres*, to assemble on a certain day in a hall of the Institute. About two o'clock of that day a mixed and very singular company, none of whom seemed to know each other, assembled. “Monsieur de Balzac suddenly entered, and all present turned to look at the stout man, who on that occasion wore gloves and a green coat. He glanced rapidly round the hall, and seeing me came and took a seat at my side. A man mounted the platform and announced that he came from M. Ledru-Rollin, minister of the Interior, to inquire what the government could do to help illustrated books (*livres d'art*). The term “books of art” roused the whole assembly, who began to shout in a manner to which the halls of the Institute were little accustomed. M. Francis Wey made a clever and truthful speech, in which he showed that illustrated books were an open

¹ *Grandes Figures, d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, par Champfleury 1 vol., Poulet-Malassis, Paris, 1861. This essay should be read by all students of Balzac.

sore in literature, and only ate up the profits which ought to go to the writers; that books of art, in short, were useless things, and altogether injurious to the interests of men of letters. Whereupon the assembly gave three groans for books of art, and the private secretary of M. Ledru-Rollin hastily disappeared, leaving the authors to discuss the matter alone. Now it is noticeable that the most turbulent of all meetings, where the persons present least understand each other, and give the worst explanations of their meaning, are those of literary men. The wise chairman is he who manages to prevent a discussion. Monsieur de Balzac laughed immensely at the uproar; he was pleased as a child with the noise, and his stomach shook in his pleated trousers. 'What singular literary men!' he said to me. 'I don't know one of them; where do they come from? do tell me who they are.' I told him the names of all I knew. When the tumult had subsided a little, the assembly voted to send two delegates to make M. Ledru-Rollin understand that books of art were useless things, and that he would do much better to encourage literature in other ways. M. de Balzac was chosen as one of the delegates; on this he mounted the platform and said, after thanking the assembly, that he could not accept the honor conferred upon him. He pointed out that the minister had asked a question of literary men, and that it would not do to reply to a question with a piece of advice. 'Either make no answer,' he said, 'or answer about books of art.' The assembly, however, sent their advice to the ministry by other delegates; and so ended the sole effort of the republic of liberty, equality, and fraternity to benefit literature."

Champfleury adds, by the way, that Balzac was one of the first to enter the Tuileries on the 24th of February, 1848, after the flight of Louis-Philippe. He told a friend who met him that he had come to get a piece of the velvet of the throne.¹

Another cause of trouble between Balzac and his editors and publishers arose from the pernicious system of payment that prevailed, — caused, it may be, by the stringency of money after the revolution of July, but none the less dangerous to the interests of both parties. Payments were almost invariably made in bills payable at distant dates. If a writer needed money, which was usually the case, he was subjected to both trouble and loss in getting these notes discounted. In Balzac's case (probably in that of other writers) such transactions were frequent, and the notes sometimes matured and came back upon the publishers, before the manuscript was delivered to them. This was naturally a cause of complaint, and the state of things was complicated by his other money difficulties. Much has been written of those difficulties. Other parts of his life being in obscurity, the story of his debts and his struggle to pay them has unfortunately acquired undue proportions. His own imagination, goaded by a sense of honor which all accounts (of enemies as well as friends) attribute to

¹ It may not be impertinent to add here, in a note, that the English nurse of the present writer was carried into the Tuileries directly after the king's flight by a surging mob of rioters. She was brave as a lion; and one of the combatants, seeing her interest, slashed off a piece of the throne with his sabre and gave it to her. This piece, which is of crimson velvet heavily worked in gold, is in the possession of the writer. The throne was burned that night in the Place du Château d'Eau.

him, magnified them. The indiscriminating publication of his letters to his mother, directing her in the management of his affairs, and sometimes defending himself, not without irritation, against what appear to have been her nagging complaints, has done his memory an injury by presenting him in a grasping and money-getting light. The facts, now seen from a distance, are easily understood. He began life under the inspiration of an unbounded ambition, quickly handicapped by debt, with nothing to pay that debt or to live by except his pen, and gifted with a high sense of honor. Could he have continued to live a garret-life of solitude, he might have paid his debts within a certain time and gained his freedom. But was it possible for him to have lived in that way? No. Given the man, his genius, his ambition, the bent of his mind, which was to the study of life, his tastes for the beautiful, the intoxication of his first successes, which brought him into personal relations with wealth and luxury, and, above all, his imagination, it was not possible for the historian of human society to live remote from its life; he was of necessity a sharer in it. Debt, as we know, thrives upon itself. To meet his obligations and get the means of living in the world, he promised books to publishers and received advanced payments, on the system already mentioned; and the books were often not forthcoming at the promised time. These habits and practices made all publishers inimical to him; though it does not anywhere appear, after careful study, that his engagements were not fulfilled in the end, nor that any publisher or editor suffered by him. On the contrary, there is more than one instance of his

buying back his copy from the editors of reviews who were not satisfied, paying for the costs of the parts already published. He took back *Séraphita* in this way, after three numbers had been published in the "Revue de Paris."

The general dissatisfaction between himself and his publishers broke out, finally, in his memorable dispute with Buloz, then editor of the "Revue de Paris," and also of the "Revue des Deux Mondes." His sister gives an account of it in her narrative, but it is well to add Werdet's statement of the actual facts; coming from Werdet, who was in position to know them, and who would not have spared Balzac had they told against him, they are probably correct.

M. Buloz having, in 1835, bought *Le Lys dans la Vallée* for the "Revue de Paris," on Balzac's usual terms, sold the right of publication to a French review at Saint Petersburg, and the book was issued there before it was half issued in Paris. Moreover, it was printed, not from Balzac's final proofs, on which he had given the order to print, but from the first corrected proof; letters were printed as part of the text, the beginning and end of sentences were omitted, the corrections and additions were added, not substituted, so that twenty pages of the Paris edition were swelled to forty pages of the Russian. The injustice was great to Balzac, who, finding himself unable to get redress, declared openly that "M. Buloz had done injury to his, Balzac's, reputation, and to the cause of French literature." Buloz replied that he had acted within his legal rights, which allowed him to publish the book as he saw fit up to a period of three months from the last publication in

the "Revue de Paris." Balzac then proposed to compromise the matter by recovering his rights in the book when the publication in the "Revue de Paris" ceased. Buloz refused. Some of the associates in the "Revue" sustained Buloz, others Balzac. The acrimony was great; it led to a series of cabals and hatreds against Balzac, who was comparatively defenceless under them. Out of the whole newspaper press only one sheet, the "Quotidienne," supported him, but that did so heartily. Balzac then brought an action against the "Revue de Paris," and was sustained in the courts. Buloz was condemned to give up the book at once, and pay the costs of the suit. Balzac immediately rewrote the first chapter, which had already been published in the "Revue;" Werdet put the whole book in type, and three days after the decision was rendered eighteen hundred copies out of an edition of two thousand was sold in two hours.

At this period Werdet, as Balzac's publisher, was admitted to the solitude in which his working days and nights were spent, and he gives a little picture of it which is worth preserving. "He usually," writes Werdet, "went to bed at eight o'clock after a very light dinner, and almost invariably was seated before his little writing-table by two in the morning. Until six his lively, active pen (he always used crow-quills) ran at full speed over the paper, emitting electric sparks. The grating of that pen alone interrupted the monastic silence of his solitude. At six he took his bath, remaining in it a whole hour. At eight o'clock Auguste brought him a cup of coffee, which he drank without sugar. From eight to nine I was admitted to bring

him proofs, or take away the corrected ones, and to wrest from him, if possible, a few bundles of manuscript. The labor of composition then began again, and lasted, with the same ardor, till noon, when he breakfasted on two boiled eggs and bread, drinking nothing but water, and ending this frugal meal with a cup of excellent coffee, still without sugar. From one to six at work again, always work. Then he dined very lightly, drinking one small glass of Vouvray, which he liked much, declaring it had the power to raise his spirits. From seven to eight he received me again, and sometimes his neighbors, Jules Sandeau and Émile Regnault. This life lasted six weeks, or two months, or more. His seclusion over, he seemed possessed of a feverish activity, and to make himself another man, as it were. He plunged into society, where he gathered fresh colors on his palette, and pillaged his honey like a bee. . . .

“His servants loved him. Rose, the cook, a true cordon bleu (we called her *La Grande Nanon*), used to go into despair when her master, in his working months, neglected her dainty dishes. I have seen her come into his room on tiptoe, bringing a delicious consommé and trembling with eagerness to see him drink it. Balzac would catch sight of her, perhaps the fumes of the soup would reach his olfactories; then he would toss back his mane of hair with an impatient jerk of his head, and exclaim in his roughest and most surly voice: ‘Rose, go away; I don’t want anything; let me alone!’ ‘But *Mossieu* will ruin his health if he goes on this way; *Mossieu* will fall—ill!’ ‘No, no! let me alone, I say,’ in a thundering

voice, 'I don't want anything; you worry me; go away!' Then the good soul would turn to go slowly, very slowly, muttering: 'To take such pains to please Mossien! and such a soup — how good it smells! Why should Mossien keep me in his service if he does n't want what I do for him?' This was too much for Balzac. He called her back, drank the soup at a gulp, and said in his kindest voice, as she went off radiant to her kitchen, 'Now, Rose, don't let this happen again.' When his microscopic groom, a poor little orphan whom he called Grain-de-mil, died, Balzac took extreme care of him, and never failed to go and see him daily during his illness. Yes, God had given my great writer a heart of gold; and those who really knew him adored him. He possessed the art of making others love him to such a degree that in his presence they forgot any real or fancied complaint against him, and only remembered the affection they bore him."

Although Balzac parted company with journalism in 1831, and was from that time aloof on his own road in literature, he never ceased to desire the growth of sound criticism, which he declared did not exist in France. "I believe," he said, "that if ever patient, thorough; enlightened criticism was needed it is now, when the multiplicity of works of all kinds, and the uprising of ambitions are producing general confusion and the same want of order in literature which is observable in the art of painting. In that art matters have reached such a pass that there are neither masters nor schools; the absence of discipline is injuring the sacred cause of art, and is becoming a hindrance to its faculties — to a sense

of the beautiful even, on which production rests. What is the critic in the present day who understands the sources of criticism, and employs them with the laudable purpose of explaining and bringing into use the methods of literary art, having read and studied the works he criticises? To read a work and understand it for one's self before rendering an account of it to the public; to search for its defects in the interests of literature and not for the sad amusement of grieving an author is a task which takes time, — weeks, not days."

With ideas like these in his mind he bought up, in 1835, a weekly journal, then moribund, called the "Chronique de Paris." He summoned to his staff the best young talent of the day, and issued the paper semi-weekly, on Sundays and Thursdays. As editor-in-chief he took charge of the department of foreign politics, and distributed the other offices as follows: Jules Sandeau, drama; Émile Regnault, light literature; Gustave Planche and Jacques de Chandes-Aiguillon, social criticism; Alphonse Karr, satire; Théophile Gautier, Charles de Bernard, and Raymond Bruckner, novels and poems. Balzac's own contribution to the work was a series of papers on the current state of Europe, entitled *La France et l'Étranger*. The forty-one articles are extremely interesting as showing the study that he gave to subjects which were, one might think, outside of his line of thought. Those who can remember the discussion of foreign politics in the days, especially that on the "Eastern question," will be interested in them. They relate chiefly to the general condition of Europe; but Americans will observe that several intelligent references to the United

States occur in the course of them. However, whether it was that Balzac aimed too high to amuse the public, or that, as Werdet suggests, he could not make his young staff work, the "Chronique de Paris" proved a failure, and lived but a few months. Five years later he again renewed the attempt; but this time he did the work alone. In 1840 he began the "Revue Parisienne," a monthly periodical written wholly by himself; which lived three months, and died for want of subscribers. Some of the articles in these numbers have been greatly praised by French critics, especially those on Fenimore Cooper and on Stendhal; but for the most part they belonged to their day, and have passed away with it. Among them is the well-known criticism on Sainte-Beuve's "Histoire de Port Royal," which, however just it may be from a literary and historical point of view, does not fulfil Balzac's own desire to avoid the "sad amusement of grieving an author." It is true that Sainte-Beuve had assailed Balzac six years earlier, when reviewing *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, by touching on personal matters which had nothing to do with literature, and were peculiarly wounding to him, — namely, his relation through his books to women, combined with an imaginary sketch of his early life. The two men were antagonistic by nature; and it is to the honor of Sainte-Beuve's cold and rather sour spirit that he did, after Balzac's death, impelled by his true literary sense, write a review of him which was fully as just and perceptive as his nature could allow him to make it; and it must not be forgotten that with all his limitations he saw and said what is, in fact, the deepest truth about Balzac, —

namely, that posterity alone could judge him.¹ Chateaubriand says somewhat the same thing in his modest valuable essay. "There are two ways of criticising M. de Balzac," he says. "The simplest is to read his works, to understand them, and then sit down and write an article on the *Comédie Humaine*. The other method, wellnigh impossible for our present generation, is to shut one's self up for six months, and carefully study in their every detail, as we study a difficult language, not only the *Comédie Humaine*, but all M. de Balzac's works. This cannot be done quickly. Perhaps in twenty years, fifty years, after ten generations of students have gathered together the chief materials, some man of great intellect will profit by their labours and will combine them all in one great commentary."

It was Balzac's ambition, as it has ever been the ambition of the great minds representing human nature, to do dramatic work. He regarded the stage as a great, if not the greatest, teacher of men; the most powerful and wide-reaching of moral influences. He placed it far above the work of the novelist. It was natural therefore that his ambition should constantly keep before his mind the hope of becoming a dramatic author. We have already seen how practice and the throwing-off of many mature and comparatively worthless books were necessary before he gathered together his powers as a novelist. It is possible that if his life had been prolonged he might have been in the perfect peace of a prosperous married life, and given himself wholly to dramatic art, and with his unflinching conscientiousness have trained his powers in

¹ *Portraits contemporains*, par C. A. Sainte-Beuve, vol. I. Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1889.

doing work that would have lived forever. As it is, the five dramas produced upon the stage (there are more than a score of others, finished and unfinished, still in manuscript) are far from equal to his other work. They are worth studying, however, for it will be seen that their chief defects come from his habits as a novelist, which time and practice might have corrected. For instance, the stage requires a clear and easily distinguished plot; in Balzac's novels the plot is often, it might be said, absent. He depicts life, and life has no such artificial arrangement; but for the stage it is necessary to bring the portion of life depicted sharply into focus, and this Balzac had not trained himself to do. Also, the management of his scenes is clumsy, the dialogue heavy, with the philosophical and didactical tendency which those who truly care for his books agree to welcome there. Yet, in spite of these defects of form for stage composition, he had, in an eminent degree, the dramatic instinct.

The last play that he wrote, *Le Faiseur* (The Speculator), ought to be rewritten for the stage of the present day, for it is marvellous as a prophecy of the pass to which money would bring the world; it is, in fact, a truer picture of our times than of the times in which it was written. George Henry Lewes made an inadequate version of it which was played for a time in London.

In addition to his higher dramatic ambitions he had that of earning a better wage for his labor; this he shares in common with all novelists, who in these days, as in his, find that purely literary work is not remunerated for the toil it costs, and that the stage alone repays their labor. At the time when he produced his

first play, *Vautrin*, he was under an unusual pressure of ill-luck. The walls of Les Jardies had crumpled down, his brother Henry was in trouble, which threw certain obligations upon him, and a first dramatic venture, which he does not name, but which had cost much labor, and was sold for a premium of six thousand francs, exclusive of royalties, had been returned owing to lack of money on the part of the theatre to bring it out. No critical judgment was ever rendered upon *Vautrin*, which was acted for the first and only time at the Porte-Saint-Martin in 1840, by Frédéric Lemaître, who played Vautrin in the rôle of a Mexican general, happened to wear a toupee which was thought to mimic and deride Louis Philippe, who was noted for that pyramidal covering to his baldness, which gave a sort of stalk to his pear-shaped head. The play was forbidden by the government the next day, with an offer of indemnity to Balzac, which he refused, asking, however, for compensation to the theatre and the actors. "I refused," he says in a letter to Madame Visconti. "I said that I had either a right to it or no right to it. If I had a right, my obligations to others must be considered. I said I asked nothing that I valued such virginity of spirit; that my wife was mine, nothing for myself, or all for the others."

His second play, *Les Ressources de Quinola*, performed at the Odéon, March 15th, 1842, and failed. Balzac, who had set high hopes upon this piece, continued to think it worthy of a better fate, mentioning in his preface to the printed version that only four persons had defended it, namely: Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Madame de Girardin, and Léon Gozlan. The t

was a crushing one, and it wrung from him a grieved and disheartened cry in a letter to his mother, dated April, 1842 : —

“The life I live,” he writes, “is not fit to share with others. I tire out both friends and relatives ; they one and all avoid my sad home, and things will now be more difficult, if not impossible, than ever ; the loss of money from my play only complicates the situation. . . . I don’t know what to do ; but I must decide on some course within the next few days. When my furniture is sold, and Les Jardies too, there will not be much left ; I shall be once more alone with my pen and a garret. I shall live from hand to mouth on articles I can no longer write as I once did with the celerity of youth. You think — my nearest all think — that the egotism of my toil is personal selfishness. I do not deceive myself : if up to this time, working as I have worked, I have not succeeded in getting clear of debt and making a living, future work will not save me. I must do something else. I must seek some other position.”

It was at this time that he wrote *Albert Savarus*, a book containing much about himself, but little read, — the story of a man’s love through passionate effort and a great defeat.¹

¹ It has been said that *Albert Savarus* was inspired by his relations with Madame Hanska. But this cannot be so. It is unmistakably the picture of man’s first love for woman in his youth. At the time *Albert Savarus* was written (a year before Monsieur Hanski’s death) Balzac’s relation to Madame Hanska was that of friendship only. It had, no doubt, the germs of love, but they were not developed until later. At this time it certainly was not in his thoughts as the inspiration of *Albert Savarus*. His love for Madame Hanska was that of his mature life, not of his youth ;

Of his succeeding plays, *Paméla Giraud* was brought out at the Gaieté in September, 1843, when Balzac was paying his first visit to Madame Hanska at St. Petersburg, after the death of her husband. He seems to have taken little interest in it. *La Marâtre* was produced at the Théâtre Historiquè, June, 1848. *Le Faiseur* was not played at all during his lifetime, but after his death it was reduced to three acts and brought out successfully, August, 1851, at the Gymnase, under the title of *Mercadet*, and at the Théâtre Français, October, 1868, with M. Got in the leading part.

Théophile Gautier dwells at length on what he calls the absolute modernity of Balzac's genius. "Balzac owes nothing," he says, "to antiquity. For him there are neither Greeks nor Romans, nor any trace in the composition of his talent of Homer, or Virgil, or Horace, not even of the *Viris illustribus*; no one was ever less classic." It is quite true, obviously true, that Balzac's genius was brought to bear solely on the present. Its work lay there, — a work so teeming that there was (to give the simplest of reasons) no room for extraneous thoughts and images. If at times it rose above the plane of its immediate work it was to other regions than those of classic antiquity. But none the less is Balzac's genius allied to antiquity so far as that is the representative of the eternal verities. Look, for instance,

although it was a repetition of that early love. The book was written under the bitter sense that his life was once more a failure, his vocation insufficient for his needs, and that his literary ambition, which had hitherto been the mainstay of his life, had lost its vitality. At such a moment of fresh disappointment and despair his mind reverted to the sorrows of his youth.

at the awfulness of Fate as it stalks through his pages, relentlessly pursuing men like Philippe Bridau and Baron Hulot to their doom; the spirit of Greek tragedy is there. Or, turn to his picturing of Sorrow. He himself points to the source from which he learned it as he walked in Père-Lachaise in search of sorrows. "Of all the affections of the soul," he says, "sorrow is the hardest to depict; in that we moderns are the very humble servants of the ancients." If we turn to the patient mother's sorrow in Agathe Bridau, the repentant mother's sorrow in Lady Brandon, the noble grief of César Birotteau, the anguish of Colonel Chabert, the blighted life of Albert Savarus, or Dante's despairing vision on the Seine, we see an instinct in Balzac's genius which was certainly not modern, for such sorrows, though they belong to all time, are not characteristic of our day as they were of antiquity.

Gantier goes farther, and says that this modernity affected Balzac's sense of art. "He read with careless eyes the marble strophes in which Greek art has sung the glory of the human form. He could look at the Venus of Milo without ecstasy; but if a Parisian woman draped in her shawl, with all her many graces, stopped before that immortal statue, his eyes lighted up with pleasure. Ideal beauty, with its serene, pure lines, was too simple, too cold, too uniform, for his complicated, teeming, and diversified genius." This is surely too narrow a conclusion. It is true that Balzac had no sympathy with romantic ideals, whether ancient or modern; and it may also be said that his deepest appreciation of art was as the work of men's hands, — here its appeal to his mind was probably through the

fellow-feeling of his own struggle in manipulating his art. "The artist," he says, "is a creator; the man who disposes of thought is a sovereign. Kings have commanded nations for a limited time; artists command the ages; shall we forget that art from the dawn of fresco and of sculpture is a Power to the present day?" But many proofs could be adduced from his writings of his reverence for the ability of art to render "serene, pure" truth. "Who but Raffaele," he exclaims, "can paint a virgin? for literature in this respect falls below art."

His sense of certain arts, as art, may have been defective; his judgment, perhaps his enjoyment, of poetry certainly was; the trammels of that art affected him. But he was himself a poet, and a great poet. There is no evidence, either way, as to his knowledge of the classics (except that as a lad of sixteen he studied them ardently), but the man who described the heroic deeds of his own time in heroic words, as in his pictures of Napoleon, must have loved Homer; and he who saw the vision of the SHADE, "standing upon the outer verge of that dark circle of the abyss of woe, his feet straining, with cruel tension, to spring upward" to the Woman-Soul from which he was forever parted, knew Dante as few in our day know him. And what shall we say of the Assumption in *Séraphita*? In a future age, when the subject is better understood, that will be counted as the work of one of the greatest poets of the nineteenth century; at present it is neither ancient nor modern art, but a vision of futurity.

There is, however, much to corroborate Gautier's opinion (which is just, so far as it goes, but misses the higher ground which Balzac reached) in the fact that

the art in which he found most personal enjoyment, namely, music, is a modern art; also in the further fact that his collection of rare things, so lovingly catalogued in *Cousin Pons*, comprised chiefly the treasures of man's choicest handiwork, especially such as had historic interest attaching to them; but above all, in the signal instance that one form of his own work, his style, is essentially modern.

It is not possible for foreigners to judge of the style of a French writer from the French point of view, nor should they attempt to do so. The necessary understanding is bred in the bone, and no acquired comprehension can take its place. There are, of course, some points which a foreigner can perceive, and several on which the close intercourse that comes of translation justifies an opinion; but it must always be borne in mind that the opinion is English, not French, and due allowance must be made for this. Balzac's style is the voice of his genius; what his genius was, that his style is, — like master, like man. When he wrestled in solitude to form his thought, he took the words that best formulated it. Language was not to him an art in itself, it was the sluice of his ideas. As the torrent of his thought, such as we see it in his books, came rushing on, with its hundred currents and aspects, philosophical, metaphorical, descriptive, it seized words, or made them, or modelled phrases, as its expression needed. This was certainly not classical, and many of the French writers who in Balzac's day were still under the traditions of the seventeenth century were shocked; though he was not as much of a neologist as they said he was, for the studies he had made of the French

language from the time of Rabelais for the *Contes Drolatiques* enabled him to replace many words which the purists of the seventeenth century had discarded. But however impetuous the torrent of Balzac's writing, the current is always clear; it is not limpid, like the soft flowing of George Sand's language, but in whatever channel, or stream, or brook it runs, the words that best express the thing to be expressed are there. There are times, in fact, when Balzac's style is matchless in its presentation of the *feeling* of the scene he is describing. Take, for instance, the rendering of the "majesty of Cold," the flight of the eider duck, the breaking of the ice-bonds, in *Séraphita*. It may almost be said that words of description could no farther go in conveying not only a scene, but the sensation of it. Could poetry as an art do more?

It has been said that Balzac is a difficult writer to translate. He does not seem so, for the reason that he is so clear. There are times when it is easy to see that he has worked too long over his thought, and has corrected his original words too often. Patience is then needed to construct a passage after him; indeed, it sometimes seems as though the clauses of a paragraph were like the bits of a Chinese puzzle, to be turned this way and that before they can be fitted into place; but this is rare, and happens only when his mind flags a little, or his relentless conscience will not let him give up the expression of minute particulars. For the most part, and particularly when an ardent emotion or conviction carries him through equally long sentences with many clauses, the current of his thought runs clear, like rapids with the sunlight in them. It is noticeable to

a translator that no freedom is allowed by Balzac ; the actual translated word or its closest equivalent must be used, or something of the meaning is lost. This is not so with other French writers, — George Sand, for instance ; it often happens that one fairly synonymous word seems to do as well as another in rendering her meaning. Balzac, on the contrary, keeps a translator under his thumb. Sometimes, in the course of his long and fiery sentences some trifling word has been overlooked, and when the end is reached the meaning comes out crookedly ; it is like dropping a stitch in a woman's knitting ; it cannot be patched in ; the work must be unravelled, the stitch picked up, and the whole reknitted. In much of the French literature of the present day a translator, and probably all foreigners who read French, are hampered by the self-consciousness of the writers, which seriously affects their style. The reader, or translator, has to consider not only the subject of a book and its presentation, but the personality of the writer, — an under-current of confidential communication must be kept up with a third element. This appears to a foreigner to vitiate a style. Balzac is free from this defect. His writings are absolutely impersonal. His thought speaks to you, never himself. He is not so unwise as to complicate that which he wishes to put into you by letting you see the hand that does it ; though this in him is not so much a conscious self-restraint as the necessity of his genius, which saw his thought as a thing apart from himself.

Théophile Gautier, who had a delightfully rich and vivid style of his own, says : “ The French language, refined away by the academicians of the seventeenth cen-

tury, is, when conformed to, only suitable for the expression of general ideas and the rendering of conventional forms in a vague way. In order to represent the multiplicity of his details, types, characters, architectures, household surroundings, etc., Balzac was forced to make for himself a special language composed of the technological terms of the arts and sciences, the studios, the street, the theatre itself. Any and every word which had a distinct thing to say was welcomed by him, and he would slash an incision into his sentences or complacently add parentheses to admit them. It was this that made superficial critics say that Balzac did not know how to write. He had, though he himself did not think so, a style, and a very fine style,— the logical and mathematical style of his idea.” “As for style,” said Sainte-Beuve, himself a purist, “he has it; delicate, subtle, liquid, picturesque, having no analogy whatever with tradition.”

Still it is right to say that in the long, involved, and many-sided work called the *Comédie Humaine* flaws exist and criticism is justified. As a work of art, as well as in its moral aspects, it can only be judged as a whole. Descriptions on which so much of his power rests, which may in fact be called the framework of his building, are often too long and too minute; but he gives them conscientiously, to bring an epoch to the eye, not to adorn or fill his tale; and for this reason it is we, perhaps, who are to blame if, occasionally, they bore us. In dialogue, too, he is sometimes turgid; not in the lighter veins, where he is often delightfully humorous, but in parts where the speakers are expressing thoughts or deep emotions. In this defect Balzac is not a French-

man ; and it is probably more trying to the French ear, accustomed to grace and a perfect touch even in things solemn, than to that of foreigners. The defect of those virtues is, of course, the tendency to superficiality, and that is so impossible to Balzac's serious mind that he errs the other way, and sacrifices, perhaps unconsciously, his art to his thought.

A frequent criticism of Frenchmen upon Balzac is that he does not and cannot depict the passion of love. M. Edmond Scherer says, as to this : " In these days love, passion, the ideal, have fallen from their right estate (*tombés en souffrance*). Balzac, in particular, is careful not to risk himself upon them. His talent, massive and materialistic, devoid of warmth and delicacy, inclined him little in that direction." Here we take issue with French criticism ; and must try this question from another point of view than that of the French social code. That code is, however, the gist of the whole matter. The French system of marriage shuts out (as a general thing) the passion and ideal of love from the knowledge of young girls. Novelists are therefore driven to depict it only in married women. Obviously, a fortunate marriage offers little opportunity for romance ; writers are therefore obliged to write of unhappy marriages and the consequent lover. Without offering any opinion as to the merits or demerits of this marriage system, it is certain that it has led French novelists to depict love and marriage in a way that does great injustice to the French nation. Some, conscientiously indeed, believe that the passion of love is too great and lofty to bow its head to human laws. But that was not how Balzac viewed it. He has made some charming pictures of girlish love

within the limits allowed by the French code, and a few equally delightful pictures of married love, but he has made none of the beauty of illicit passion. He believed, with Another, that the woman taken in adultery should be forgiven and *restored*, but his strongest belief was in the Family, and he never held up to admiring sympathy that which strikes at the root of it.

Balzac is the father of realism. In the dawn of his genius true realism was revealed to him. "To think is to see," he said. "Possibly," he added, "materialism and spiritualism express two sides of the same thing." Here we have the key-note to which he tuned himself; and he had an inward consciousness which sustained his thought. A discussion of Balzac's realism would be out of place here; the *Comédie Humaine* is the embodiment of it. There he ran the gamut of his conception of realism, — shrinking, as he says, from none of the consequences of his principles. Herein lies his morality: for Balzac is a moralist; one of the greatest moralists of the nineteenth century; one who does not preach, but *shows* the truth. To discuss this matter fully would prolong it beyond the limits of this memoir; but we may dwell for a moment on one point of it. In his earliest youth, almost in his childhood, he had longed to meet a woman-angel, and the desire kept his spirit pure. When he entered life and saw the condition of womanhood, the pass to which woman had been brought and had brought herself, he set about — under a true inspiration, and with his natural instinct to take the part of the sorrowful and helpless, no matter what their vices were — to better her condition. How has he done

it? By presenting facts in their most awful reality; not sparing woman with any false tenderness or fear of outcry (no shrinking from the consequences here!), but warning her by his realism, teaching her by the eye to see the horror and the distortion of her position. He himself gives this as his deliberate purpose; it is, he says, by showing facts that he must bring men's minds to the emancipation of women and their higher education; and when he said this he had in view something far more fundamental than our present surface questions of woman's emancipation. If realism has the virtue that its followers attribute to it (and it has), this is what its virtue should accomplish; this is what Balzac sought to do for woman, leading her step by step from her lowest degradation in *Cousine Bette* up through *Eugénie Grandet*, *Ève Séchard*, *Marguerite Claës*, and others like them, to *Séraphita*, where the destiny of woman is presented as a series of lives ascending from love of self, love of others, love of heaven, till the end be won,—a book which M. Taine calls upon us to observe is the “consummation of Balzac's work, as the flower is that of its plant; a book in which the genius of the writer attains its complete expression, foreseen, explained, justified, and led up to by all his other work.”

Yes, *Séraphita* was, indeed, the crown of his work; but he was destined to leave the world with much of that work unaccomplished. All was mapped out; and it stirs the feelings painfully to look along the vista of his plans and see what the world has lost. Among these projected works (a list of which will be found in the appendix) his thoughts particularly clung to the

hope of writing *Le Prêtre catholique*, the *Pathologie de la vie sociale*, the *Anatomie des Corps Enseignants*, and the *Monographie de la vertu*. "Looking at the work still to be done," he says, in his preface to the *Comédie Humaine*, "perhaps my readers will say, 'May your life be prolonged!' My own prayer is that I may not be so much tortured by men and events as I have been in the past, since the beginning of my great and terrible labor. Yet I have had one support, for which I return thanks to God. The highest talent of our day, the noblest characters, the truest friends, have clasped my hand, and said to me, 'Take courage!' Why should I not own that such proofs of affection, such testimonials given now and then by strangers, have upheld me in my career in spite of myself, in spite of unjust attacks, in spite of calumnies that have pursued me, — upheld me against disheartenment, and also against that too vivid hope, the expression of which has sometimes been mistaken for excessive self-love?"

Anecdotes that reveal the fancies and habits of a great mind and show it in action are precious, if they bear the stamp of truth; in Balzac's case they are invaluable, because so unguardedly natural. Here is one in the language of M. Léon Gozlan, somewhat abridged: —

"One evening I received a note from Balzac, dated Les Jardies, asking me to meet him the next day at three o'clock, in the Champs Élysées, between the Horses of Marly and the Café des Ambassadeurs. I must be punctual, he said, as the matter was important. The day was dull and chilly, the ground damp, a cold wind blowing. 'Let us walk fast,' said Balzac,

when we met, 'to keep up the circulation. I have just written a little tale for the first number of the "Revue Parisienne." I am rather pleased with it, that is, I shall be when I have found — that which you must help me to find to-day. But I must describe to you the principal personage, — in fact, the only personage in this little poem of morals, the grievous morals of our social epoch, such as the national politics of the last ten years have made them.' He thereupon described the personage he had created. 'Now,' he said, 'you'll see what I want of you. For such a man, so extraordinary a man, I must have a name in keeping with his destiny; a name which explains and pictures and proclaims him; a name that shall be *his*, that could not possibly be the cognomen of any other. Well, it won't come to me; I have tried every possible vocal combination without success. I will not baptize my type with a stupid name. We must find one that shall fit the man as the gum the tooth, the root the hair, the nail the flesh. Don't you understand?'

"'No.'

"'No? don't you admit that there are names that remind you of a diadem, a sword, a helmet, a flower?'

"'No.'

"'Names that veil and reveal a poet, a satiric wit, a profound philosopher, a famous painter?'

"'No, no.'

"'I know better,' said Balzac, much provoked. 'Names are given on high before they are given in this low world. It is a mystery, to which it is not allowable to apply the petty rules of our trivial reasoning. I am not the only one who believes in this miraculous con-

junction of man with his name, which he bears as a divine or devilish talisman, to light his way on earth, or burn him up. Great minds have always shared this belief; and strange to say, the masses do, too.'

“ ‘Why don't you make a name?’

“ ‘I tell you I can't. I am worn out with work. I have tried, but it won't come. We must discover it?’

“ ‘If it exists.’

“ ‘It does exist,’ said Balzac, solemnly, ‘and you must suggest a way to find it. That is what I want you for.’

“After reflecting a few moments I said, ‘Let us read the signs in the streets; there you'll find all kinds of names, pompous, ridiculous, queer, paradoxical; enough to rejoice the heart of a vaudevillist; virtuous names, wicked names, brigands' names; these last are usually those of chandlers and confectioners.’

“The idea delighted Balzac. Alas, I had not foreseen to what it would lead.

“ ‘Where shall we begin?’ he said.

“ ‘Why, here,’ I answered.

“We were just then leaving the court of the Louvre, and entering the rue Coq-Saint-Honoré. It was not to be expected that our first steps would produce anything. Names were plentiful, but they had no physiognomies. He looked one side of the street, I the other, our noses in the air, and our feet heaven knows where, which produced much jostling with pedestrians, who probably took us for blind men. Down the rue du Coq, through the rue Saint-Honoré to the Palais-Royal, and all the collateral streets to the rue Vivienne, the place de la Bourse, the rue Neuve Vivienne, the bou-

levard Montmartre. At the corner of the rue Montmartre I broke down; alarmed that Balzac refused to accept any of the names I pointed out to him, I declined to go a step further.

“‘It is always the way with everything,’ said Balzac. ‘Christopher Columbus abandoned by his crews! I shall land on the soil of America alone. You may go.’

“‘You are in the midst of many Americas,’ I retorted, ‘and you won’t land; you are very unreasonable; you have rejected splendid names. It is Christopher Columbus himself who is to blame.’

“‘Fatigue makes a man more unjust than anger; I know that myself,’ said Balzac. ‘Here, take my arm, and go as far as Saint-Eustache.’

“‘But no farther?’

“‘So be it.’

“But he contrived before we reached Saint-Eustache to drag me through the length and breadth of the rues du Mail, de Cléry, du Cadran, des Fossés-Montmartre, and the place de la Victoire, filled with magnificent Alsacian names; in the midst of which I declared to him that if he did not make an immediate choice I would leave him on the spot.

“‘There is only the rue du Bouloi left,’ said Balzac; ‘don’t refuse me the rue du Bouloi, and then we’ll go back to Les Jardies for dinner.’

“I granted him the rue du Bouloi, and it was at the farther end of that street that Balzac, — never shall I forget it! — having glanced through a little gate, an oblong, narrow, mean little gate opening into a damp alley, suddenly changed color, quivered all over, uttered a cry, and said to me: —

“ ‘There! there! there! read it.’

“ ‘And I read—MARCAS.’

“ ‘MARCAS,’ he muttered. ‘Marcas; what a name! Marcas,—the name of names; Marcas! we will look no farther.’

“ ‘So be it,’ I said; ‘I ask no better.’

“ ‘Marcas; my hero is Marcas,’ he went on; ‘philosopher, writer, statesman, poet ignored; it is all there. Marcas! I shall call him Z. Marcas, to add a flame, a plume, a star to the name. Z. Marcas must be some great and unknown artist, engraver, carver, or silversmith, like Benvenuto Cellini.’

“ ‘I can soon find out,’ I said.

“ Leaving Balzac in adoration before the house, I inquired of the concierge. Returning towards the street, I shouted from afar:—

“ ‘Tailor!’

“ ‘Tailor!’ Balzac was silent for a moment; his head drooped. Then he looked up proudly.

“ ‘He deserved a better fate,’ he said; ‘but no matter; I will immortalize him.’”

Those who have read *Le Lys dans la Vallée* cannot fail to remember the exquisite story of the wild-flowers, and perhaps if they studied it deeply they may have been puzzled to identify a certain herb, the description and the name of which do not agree. Here is the explanation. The anecdote is told by Léon Gozlan.

“ ‘Yes,’ said Balzac, laying down three or four volumes that he carried under his arm, ‘that is Fenimore Cooper’s last work. It is fine, it is grand, it is intensely interesting. I know no one but Walter Scott

who has ever risen to that grandeur and serenity of coloring. . . . When I conceived the idea of *Le Lys dans la Vallée* I had, like Cooper, the idea of giving scenery a splendid part in the work. Full of this plan, I plunged into natural pantheism like a pagan. I made myself tree, horizon, stream, star, brooklet, light. And as science is a good helper in everything, I wanted to know the names and properties of certain plants which I meant to bring into my descriptions. My first desire was to learn the names of all those little herbs we tread upon in country places, along the roadsides, in the meadows, everywhere. I began by asking my own gardener. 'Oh, Monsieur,' he said, 'nothing easier to know than that.' 'What is it, then, since it is so easy?' 'Well, some is luzern; this is clover; that is sainfoin.' 'No, no, that is n't what I mean. I want to know what you call all these little herbs under my feet; here, I'll gather a tuft of them.' 'Oh, that, monsieur, that's grass.' 'Yes, but the name of each herb, long, short, straight, curved, smooth, prickly, rough, velvety, dry, damp, dark-green, pale-green.' 'Well, they are all called grass.' I could n't get anything out of him but 'Grass.' The next day a friend came to see me; he happened to be a great traveller, and I said to him: 'You, who are such a botanist and have been all over the world, do you know the names of the little herbs we have under our feet?' 'Bless me!' he said, 'what herbs?' 'These,' I said, and I plucked some and put them into his hand. 'The fact is,' he said, after a few moments' examination, 'I don't really know any flora but that of Malabar. If we were in India now I could tell you the names of countless little plants, but here —

‘Here you are just as ignorant as I am?’ ‘I admit it,’ he said. The next day I went to the Jardin des Plantes and questioned one of the most learned professors in the institution. ‘Oh, Monsieur de Balzac,’ he said, ‘What a thing to ask me! Here we are busy with the larch and tamarisk, and other such families; but life is too short to come down to those little herbs that are nothing at all. They concern your salad-woman. But joking apart,’ he added, ‘where are you going to put your novel?’ ‘In Touraine.’ ‘Very good; then the first peasant you meet in Touraine can tell you more than the most learned of us here.’ Down I went to Touraine, and there I found the peasants just as ignorant as the rest; so that when I wrote *Le Lys dans la Vallée* I found it impossible to describe with perfect accuracy that carpet of verdure which it would have given me such happiness to picture blade by blade.”

M. Taine says of the description in *Le Lys dans la Vallée* to which the above anecdote refers: “Oriental poetry has nothing more dazzling, more magnificent; it is intoxicating, luxurious; we float in a sky of light and perfume; all the sensuous joys of a summer’s day enter both soul and body, quivering, murmuring, like a tumultuous bevy of many-colored butterflies.”¹

¹ Nouveaux Essais de critique et d’histoire, par H. Taine. 1 vol. 3^{ème} éd. Hachette et cie., Paris, 1880. The essay on Balzac should be read. It contains a splendid flux of words in which, truth to tell, there is less of Balzac than we might expect; but wherever a judgment is given, whether for or against him, it is worth reading, though colored by M. Taine’s fancy, — as where he calls him “a business man in debt.” Werdet, who ought to know, and who is corroborated by all we find of Balzac’s life, says: “He was an honest man; an honest man in debt, and not a ‘business man in debt,’ as M. H. Taine avers.”

During the twelve years which we are now considering Balzac wrote and published seventy-nine novels and tales, — a stupendous work when we consider the wealth of ideas embodied and developed in them. The reader is referred to the appendix, where a list of each year's work will be found. So busy a life would seem to allow of no holiday, but his habit was to alternate long periods of intense application with shorter periods of relaxation, employed, naturally and perhaps unconsciously, in gathering the experience with which to pursue his work. He made, as we have seen, frequent visits to the provinces, and yearly trips to foreign countries. In September, 1833, he was at Neuchâtel, where he first met Madame Hanska; in 1834 he was at Geneva; in 1835 at Vienna; the famous journey to Sardinia was in 1838, and the following year he was in Northern Italy, and again at Vienna. After that he travelled little for four years, but went much into society. His sister tells us that he loved life and enjoyed its pleasures; he was very hospitable, and the cheery dinners given in his various homes still live in the narratives of his friends.

He remained in the rue Cassini for eight years; from there he moved to the rue des Batailles at Chaillot, where he had the enjoyment, Gautier tells us, of a magnificent view over Paris. His desire seems ever to have been for heights. In his studious youth he sought that highest point in Père-Lachaise (the spot where he now lies) whence he could see all Paris; and his dream of future earthly rest, as he tells us himself, was always for a home on a mountain. True to this feeling, he bought, in 1838, three acres of land at Ville-d'Avray, where he

erected the famous pavilion already described in a letter to Madame Carraud. A past historic interest was connected with the place, which was called Les Jardies, where, according to Saint-Simon, the courtiers of Louis XIV. were lodged when the king was at Versailles. In after years it gained a third celebrity as the home where Gambetta lived and met his death. "Nothing can exceed the beauty of my view," says Balzac, lovingly. "My house stands on the other side of the mountain, or perhaps I should say the hill of Saint-Cloud; on the north it joins the royal park; to the west I see the whole valley of Ville-d'Avray; to the east I soar above Sèvres, and my eyes take in an immense horizon, with Paris in the far distance, its smoky atmosphere reaching as far as the slopes of Mendon and Belleville, beyond which I can see the plains of Montrouge and the high-road to Orléans, which leads to Tours. The whole is of strange magnificence and full of ravishing contrasts. The valley depths have the dewy freshness, the shade, the hillocks, the verdure of the Swiss valleys. Forests and woodland everywhere; to the north the fine trees of the royal domain."

Here he camped rather than lived, for he never had the means to furnish his little home. Nevertheless, it was the scene of much generous hospitality. It was entered from the road which passed behind it. The front-door and hall (if we are to believe the friend who thus describes it) were in the garret, "and you entered the house like wine being poured into a bottle." The steep declivity in front, where his fancy pictured trees, never grew anything taller in his time than shrubs, which, he remarks exultantly, were nearly tall enough

to hide Turc, his Saint-Bernard dog. But his flowers were beautiful; it gave him as much happiness to watch their growth as to hear of his successes in the world; and, above all, he had the free air for which his spirit longed. There was, alas! a reverse to the picture in the crumbling walls; but this was not really as bad as his imagination made it. One would think from the doleful moan he sent to Madame Carraud that he was living in a sort of Herculaneum, with his household gods in fragments about him; but, in truth, it was only the garden walls that toppled over, and, after rebuilding them several times to pacify an angry neighbor, who objected to heaps of stones upon his property, Balzac bought the adjoining ground, "in order," he said, "that the stones might at least rattle down on his own land."

During part of the time when he lived at Les Jardies he kept a room in Paris, in the rue Richelieu, for convenience; but in 1843 he took an apartment at Passy (19 rue Basse) an outlying arrondissement of Paris, where he remained until he bought the small hôtel Beaujon in the rue Fortunée (now the rue Balzac), which he fitted up luxuriously in the long delayed hope of his marriage with Madame Hanska, transporting there his hidden collection of works of art of all kinds.

His expansive nature, expansive in spite of his strange secretiveness in deeper ways, sought intercourse with men in his periods of release from work. Among these friends he counted the best men of his day. Frédéric Soulié, Charles de Bernard, Charles Nodier, Victor Hugo, Heine, whom he often visited, Gavarni, Boulanger, Beyle, whose works he greatly admired, Baron Barchou de Penhoën, a former comrade at

Vendôme, Hector Berlioz, Liszt, Alfred de Musset, and the man who seems to have been closest to him in affection, and also to have received the shadow of confidences not made to others, — Théophile Gautier. Many of these men were far more prosperous than he, the greatest of them, in their mutual career; but he seems to have been truly incapable, as George Sand said he was, of envy. Otherwise one might suppose that his feelings would have been hurt when he found the way barred against his entrance to the Academy, that Immortal body which was less mongrel in those days than it is now. But he behaved with dignity, and withdrew his name when failure seemed probable. “The matter does not stir my feelings very much,” he said; “some persons think not at all, but they are mistaken. If I do get there, so much the better; if I do not, no matter.” It is characteristic of him to feel thus. He was totally without personal vanity or self-seeking. Self-assertive as to his work, absorbed in his ideas, convinced himself and eager to persuade others of their paramount value, he certainly was; but his individual self was another thing; and it is often affecting to notice how little thought or care he seemed to give to it. Léon Gozlan says of him: “Indifferent to personal fame, Balzac never gave a thought to what men might want to know of him apart from his books, — of his personal opinions, his private life and character, and his share in the daily events of the world.”

The following letter was addressed to those Academicians who intended to support his nomination. It is characteristic of Victor Hugo that he paid no attention to the request, and his ballot was cast for Balzac as a matter of principle.

“MY DEAR NODIER, — I have learned to-day, quite positively, that my situation as to fortune is one of the objections which will be brought up against me at the Academy, and I write, with deep grief, to ask you to give your influence elsewhere than in my favor.

“If I cannot enter the Academy on account of my honorable poverty, I will never present myself for admission in the day when prosperity smiles upon me. I have written the same thing to Victor Hugo, who takes an interest in my election.

“God grant you health, my kind Nodier.”

It is observable in Balzac's correspondence that he says little or nothing of his intercourse with society; yet there cannot be a doubt in the minds of those who study his work that he saw much of the world, and was in close relations with many phases of social life, particularly with women, who are the essence of it. It is impossible that he could have written of women under all aspects as he did unless he had a close personal knowledge of them. Before he became completely absorbed in Madame Hanska in 1843, there must have been a time when he saw much of many women, and may even have contemplated marriage with more than one of them. But the evidence of this period in his correspondence is slight, and his sister so distinctly says that he concealed all traces of it that a discussion of what it may have been is useless. It certainly did not influence him seriously as a man, though it was highly serviceable to his work. He remarks himself of this phase of his life that skin-deep affections did not suit him: *Les amitiés d'épiderme ne me vont pas.*

CHAPTER VII.

JUDGMENT OF CONTEMPORARY FRIENDS.

GEORGE SAND, with her good, broad mind, appreciated Balzac's nature, though she could not agree with his art (her own being so different), nor perceive the higher reaches of his spirit. No kinder or truer words, so far as they go, have been said of him than hers :¹—

“To say of a man of genius that he was essentially good and kind is the highest praise that I am able to bestow. All superiority must contend with so many obstacles and sufferings that the man who pursues his mission of genius with patience and gentleness is a great man, whatever meaning we may give to the term. Patience and gentleness are strength ; none was ever stronger than Balzac.

“Before recalling his other claims to the attention of posterity I hasten to render him this justice, which has not been sufficiently rendered by his contemporaries. I saw him often under the shock of great injustices, both literary and personal, and I never heard him say an evil word of any one. He went his painful way with a smile in his soul. Full of himself, passionately eager about his art, he was, nevertheless, modest, after his

¹ *Autour de la table*, par George Sand, 1 vol., Michel Lévy Frères, Nouvelle édition, Paris, 1875.

fashion, under an exterior of assumption which was only the naïveté of an artist (great artists are great children), and in spite of an appearance of adoration for his personal merits which was, in reality, nothing else than enthusiasm for his work.

“Balzac’s private life was very mysterious, and it has been, as I think, very ill understood by those who were initiated into it. What I know of it, from his own confidences, is of great originality and covers no black spots whatever. But these revelations, which have nothing in them that reflects upon his memory, require amplifications which would be out of place here and would not assist the purpose, chiefly literary, which I have set before me. It is sufficient to say that his sovereign end and aim in concealing his life and actions, his search for the absolute, in other words, his great work, was Freedom, the possession of his hours, the solitude of his laborious nights, — the creation, in short, of his *Comédie Humaine*.

“Balzac was called during his lifetime the ‘most prolific of novelists.’ Since his death he has been called the first of novelists. Without making any invidious categories which might wound illustrious contemporaries, it will be strictly true, I think, to say that such a term is not praise enough for a power like his. They are not novels, these imperishable books of the great critic, as novels were understood before his day. He is, and pre-eminently, the critic of human life; he has written, not alone for the pleasures of the imagination, but for the archives of moral history, the memoirs of the half-century which has now just passed. He has done for that historic period what another great, but

less thorough worker, Alexis Monteil, endeavored to do for the France of the past.

“The novel was to Balzac a frame and pretext for an almost universal examination of the ideas, sentiments, customs, habits, legislation, arts, trades, costumes, localities, in short, of all that constituted the lives of his contemporaries. Thanks to him, no earlier epoch of our country will be known to the future like ours. What would we not give, we seekers of to-day, if each vanished half-century had been transmitted to us living by a Balzac. We make our children read a fragment of the past, reconstructed with immense labor of erudition, ‘Rome in the time of Augustus,’ and the day will come when learned men, writing such histories, will turn to the France of Balzac’s period and draw their information from authenticity itself. The criticism of contemporaries on such and such a character presented in Balzac’s books, on the style, the method, the intentions and the manner of the author, will then seem what already they are beginning to seem, secondary considerations. The future will not call this vast work to account for imperfections which appear in all creations of the human brain; on the contrary, it will value even the prolixity, the excess of detail, which to us seem defects, and yet may not wholly satisfy the interest and the curiosity of the readers of the future.

“Let us say, then, to the readers of the year 2000, or 3000, who will still bear some resemblance to the men of to-day, no matter what progress they have been able to make, — to those perfected spirits who will have our needs, our passions, and our dreams, as, in spite of our own progress, we too have the passions, needs, and

dreams of the human natures which preceded us, — to them let us say that those among us who have the honor to be called to testify before the work of Balzac declare : ‘ This is truth, ’ — not absolute philosophical truth, which Balzac did not seek and this era has not found ; but the true reality of our intellectual, physical, and moral condition. This collected whole of simple narratives, these parables seldom complicated, this multitude of fictitious personages, these interiors, châteaux, garrets, these myriad aspects of country and city life, all this work of fancy is, thanks to a gift of marvellous clear-sightedness and to the exercise of extreme conscientiousness, a mirror in which imagination has shown reality. Do not seek in this history of facts the names of the models who passed before this magic glass ; the types it has preserved are anonymous. Nevertheless, know this (for here is a great prodigy of art) : each of these types sums up in itself a whole variety of the human species ; and Balzac, who sought the absolute in a certain order of things, came near finding in his own work the solution of a problem unknown until his day, — complete reality in complete fiction. Yes, readers of the future, the men of 1830 were as bad, as good, as crazy, and as virtuous, as intelligent and as stupid, as romantic and as matter-of-fact, as prodigal and as keen after gain as Balzac shows them to you. His contemporaries have not all been willing to admit it. That need not astonish you. All, nevertheless, have read his works in which they felt their own hearts beating ; they have read them with anger or — with exultation.

“ If we judge Balzac in detail, he cannot, any more than other great masters of the present and the past,

escape all critical severity. But when we examine in its totality his mighty work, be we critic, public, or fellow-artists, we must all agree, or wellnigh agree, on one point, namely, — that in the class of work to which it belongs nothing more complete ever issued from the brain of a writer. I myself, when I have read, one by one, these extraordinary books as they came from the press, I did not like them all. Some shocked my tastes, my convictions, my sympathies. At times I was tempted to say, ‘This is too long,’ or ‘That is wearisome.’ Others seemed to me fantastic, and made me say to myself with regret, ‘What is the good of it; what does he mean?’ But when Balzac, having found the secret of his destiny, and solved the enigma of his genius, grasped that deep and admirable idea of the *Comédie Humaine*, when, by laborious and ingenious classification, he welded all parts of his work into a logical whole, each of those parts, even those I least liked on their first appearance, took their rightful place and assumed their real value. Each of these books is, in fact, a page of the great work, which would be incomplete without this important page.

“For this reason it is necessary to read the whole of Balzac. Nothing is unimportant to the general work; and we soon perceive that in this immeasurable stretch of imagination, to imagination he has sacrificed nothing. Every book has been for him an awesome study. And when we think that he had not, like Dumas, the power of a marvellous memory, like Lamartine facility of style, like Alphonse Karr poetry ready-made in his eyes (not to speak of a dozen special qualities gratuitously bestowed on others by nature), but that, on the contrary,

the labor of execution was long extremely difficult to him, that form was constantly intractable to his will, that ten years of his life were sacrificed on experiments, and finally that he was ever struggling with material cares, battling with all his strength to reach a time when he might live in peace, — thinking of all these things one asks one's self what angel and what demon watched at his side and revealed to him the good and the evil, the real and the ideal, the history of which he has bequeathed to us.

“One of my friends who knew Balzac presented me to him, not in the character of *muse du département*, but as a worthy provincial woman amazed at his talent. This was the truth. Though Balzac had not at that time produced his greatest works, I was much impressed by his novel and original manner, and thought of him even then as a master to study. He was living in the rue Cassini, in a cheerful little *entresol* near the Observatory. It was there, I think, that I made the acquaintance of Emmanuel Arago, a man who afterwards became a friend of mine, and was then a mere lad. One fine day Balzac, having made a good sale of a book, affected to despise his *entresol*, and wished to leave it; but after due reflection he decided to remain, and contented himself by transforming his little rooms into a nest of boudoirs à la *marquise*. That done, he invited me to eat ices within the walls, now hung with silk and edged with lace. I laughed heartily, not dreaming that he felt any serious want of such *vain luxury*, and supposing it was nothing more than a passing fancy. I was mistaken; these needs of a dainty imagination became the tyrants of

his life; to satisfy them, he often sacrificed the commonest comfort. Henceforth he lived somewhat in this way, — lacking necessities in the midst of his superfluities, and depriving himself of soup and coffee rather than of silver-ware and Chinese porcelains. Soon reduced to amazing expedients not to part with the gew-gaws that pleased his eye, artist by fancy, child of golden dreams, he lived through his fancy in a fairy palace; obstinate withal, he accepted deliberately all anxieties and all deprivations rather than let reality dispossess him of his dream.

“ I did not say much of my own literary projects to Balzac. He did not believe in them, or rather he did not care to examine whether I was capable of anything. I did not ask his advice; he would have told me that he kept it for himself, and he would have said it as much from ingenuous modesty as from ingenuous egotism; for he had, as I have said, his way of being modest under an appearance of arrogance, a fact which I found out later with agreeable surprise. And as for his egotism, he had his reactions to self-devotion and generosity. His company was very agreeable; a little fatiguing in its rush of words to me, who am not ready enough with an answer to vary the subjects of conversation sufficiently; but his soul was of great serenity, and I never, at any moment, saw him ill-humored. He would climb, with his big stomach, all the five stories of the house on the quay Michel where I lived, and come in puffing and laughing and talking before he could get his breath. Among his intimate friends he had a nickname, which he always signed to his letters; with me it had passed into a habit to call him “ Dom

Mar." He used to pick up my manuscript from the table and cast his eyes over it as if he meant to inform himself of what it was about; but almost immediately his thoughts would go back to the work he had in hand; and he would begin to relate it to me, and I must say I found that more instructive than the hindrances which La Touche, disheartening doubter, opposed to my ideas.

"I had no theories of any kind when I began to write, and I think I had never had any when the wish to write a novel placed a pen in my hand. That did not prevent my instincts from making for me, without my knowledge, the theory which I will now explain and which I have generally followed without taking deliberate account of it,—a theory which is still, at the present moment under discussion.

"According to this theory, a novel should be a work of poetry as much as of analysis. It must have true situations and true characters, even real ones, grouped around a type which is to present and sum up the principal sentiment or idea of the book. This type usually represents the passion of love, because nearly all novels are histories of love. According to my theory (and here is where it begins) this type, this love we must idealize, not fearing to give it all the powers to which we consciously aspire ourselves, and all the sufferings which we have seen or of which we have felt the tortures. But, in any case, that type, that love, must not be degraded by the hazard of events; it must either die or triumph; and we must not fear to give it an exceptional importance in life; powers above the ordinary, charms or sufferings which go far beyond the usual limit of human things, and even beyond the probable as judged by

the majority of minds. To sum up this theory briefly, it is: the idealization of the sentiment which makes the subject, leaving to the art of the novelist the duty of placing that subject in conditions and in a frame of reality suitable to bring it vividly into relief.

“Is this theory a true one? I think it is; but it is not, and ought not to be absolute. Balzac, after a time, made me comprehend, by the variety and force of his compositions, that it was allowable to sacrifice the idealization of a subject to the truth of a picture, to the just criticism of society, to humanity itself. Balzac summed this up completely when he said to me later: ‘You are seeking man as he should be; I take him such as he is. Believe me, we are both right. The two roads lead to the same place. I, too, like exceptional beings — I am one myself. In fact, I need them as foils to my commonplace beings; and I never sacrifice them unless under necessity. But commonplace beings interest me more than they interest you. I make them grow, I idealize them, inversely, in their ugliness and stupidity. I give their deformities grotesque proportions. You can’t do that; and you are right not to be willing to look at beings and things which would give you the nightmare. Idealize in the lovely and the beautiful; that’s a woman’s work.’

“Balzac said this without any concealed disdain or disguised sarcasm. He was sincere in the brotherly feeling with which he spoke, and he has idealized woman far too much to be suspected of any degrading theory about her.

“Balzac travelled a great deal, and his friends in Paris often lost all trace of him. He had bought a

little house at Ville-d'Avray, called Les Jardies, and from there he dated many of the letters which he wrote in Russia, Italy, and elsewhere. Nevertheless, he lived at Les Jardies a good deal, and did an enormous amount of work there. Also he passed whole summers, months or weeks, in the provinces, — at Angoulême, at Issoudun in Touraine, and with me in Berry. He was also in Sardinia, where he believed, or pretended to believe, he should find strange things. He searched for treasures and found none but those he bore within him, — his intellect, his spirit of observation, his marvellous capacity, his strength, his gayety, his goodness of heart, in a word, his genius.

“The last of his journeys resulted in his marriage; but our poor Dom Mar did not long enjoy domestic happiness. A disease of the heart, about which he had often spoken to me and of which he thought himself cured, carried him off at the end of four months of married life. He was shipwrecked in port, that bold and resolute mariner. All his life he had desired to marry a woman of quality, to have no debts, to find in his own home affection and intellectual companionship. He deserved to attain his wish, for he had done gigantic service, fulfilled a splendid mission, and abused but one thing — work. Sober in all respects, his morals were pure; he dreaded excesses as the death of talent; he cherished women by his heart or his head, and his life from early youth was that of an anchorite; for, although he has written some coarse books and passed in his day for an expert in gallantry (having written the *Physiologie du Mariage* and the *Contes Drolatiques*), he was much less rabelaisian than benedictine. He loved

chastity as a choice thing, and attacked the sex only through curiosity ; when he found a curiosity equal to his own he worked the mine with the cynicism of a confessor ; that is how he himself expressed it. But when he met with health of mind and body (I repeat his own words) he was happy as a child in being able to speak of true love and rise into the higher regions of emotion.

“ He was a trifle hypercritical, but naïvely so ; and this great anatomist of life let us see that he learned all, both of good and evil, by observation of facts or contemplation of the idea, not by experience. Attached, I know not why, to the cause of monarchy to which he thought himself bound, he was so impartial by nature that the noblest personages in his books are often republicans or sôcialists. There were times when he seemed to have the tastes of a parvenu ; they were really at heart the tastes of an artist. He loved curiosities far more than luxury. He dreamed of avarice, and ruined himself constantly. He boasted of despoiling others, and never robbed any one but himself. In certain of his books he has put his ideal in the boudoir of a duchess ; elsewhere we find it in the customs of an atelier. He has seen the amusing side and also the grand side of all social destinies, of all parties, all systems. He has laughed at the stupid Bonapartists, and pitied the unfortunate Bonapartists ; he has respected all disinterested convictions. He charmed the ambitious youth of the century with golden dreams ; he flung it in the dust or the mud by laying bare before it the end of base ambitions, dissolute women, faithless friends, shame, remorse. He has branded on the forehead those great ladies whom he forced his young men

to adore. He has swept away the millions and destroyed the temples of delight in which his fancy revelled, to show, behind these chimeras, that toil and honor alone remain erect amid the ruins. He has pictured, *con amore*, the seductions of vice, and vigorously proclaimed the horrors of its contagion. He has seen all and said all, comprehended all, and divined all — how then can he be immoral? Impartiality is eminently sound and healthy for good minds; the minds it could corrupt are corrupted already, and so corrupted that impartial truth is unable to heal them.

“Balzac has been reproached for having no principles because he has, as I think, no positive convictions on questions of fact in religion, art, politics, or even love. But nowhere in his books do I see vice made respectable or virtue degraded in the reader’s eyes. If virtue succumbs, if vice triumphs, the meaning of the book is not left doubtful; society is condemned.

“It would, indeed, be puerile to declare Balzac a writer without defects. He would have been, in that case, the first whom nature ever created, and in all probability the last of his kind. He had, and he knew it himself better than those who have said so, essential faults; a labored style, false taste in certain expressions, a noticeable lack of proportion in the composition of his works. Eloquence and poetry came to him only when he ceased to search for them. He toiled over his work too long, and often spoilt it by corrections. These are all great defects; but when they are redeemed by such merits a man must be — as he said ingenuously of himself, and as he had the right to say — devilishly strong.”

A critic of our day has said of Gautier’s portrait of

Balzac that it was not critical. This may be true in the sense in which it was said, but the portrait will last long after the criticism of periods and of schools has passed away. It is a true picture of the man's nature, and the more valuable because Gautier could not have shared any of Balzac's great beliefs, while perceiving, in a measure, the spirit that gave birth to them. Was it the power of an inner man making itself felt upon his naturally sympathetic and receptive mind through his affections? At any rate, he has left us the only contemporaneous portrait of Balzac, written by a male friend, which is of value. It is given here somewhat abridged.¹

“When I saw Balzac, who was a year older than the century, for the first time, he was about thirty-six, and his personality was one of those that are never forgotten. In his presence Shakspeare's words in Julius Cæsar came to my memory; before him, ‘nature might stand up and say to all the world, “This was a man?”’ He wore the monk's habit of white flannel or cashmere, in which, some time later, he made Louis Bonlanger paint him. What fancy had led him to choose, in preference to all other costumes, this particular one, which he always wore, I do not know. Perhaps it symbolized to his eyes the cloistral life to which his work condemned him; and, benedictine of romance, he wore the robe. However that may be, it became him wonderfully. He boasted, showing me his spotless sleeves, that he never dropped the least spot of

¹ *Portraits contemporains par Théophile Gautier*, 1 vol. G. Charpentier et Cie. 5^{ème} éd. Paris. 1886.

ink upon it, 'for,' he added, 'a true literary man ought to be clean at his work.'

“The gown was flung back, disclosing the neck of an athlete or a bull, round as the section of a column, without visible muscles, and of a satiny whiteness which contrasted with the stronger tones of the face. At this period Balzac, who was then in the vigor of his age, showed signs of a robust health little in keeping with the romantic pallor then in vogue. His pure Touraine blood glowed in his full cheeks with a healthy crimson, and warmly colored those good lips, thick and curved, and ever laughing, which a slight moustache and an imperial defined, without concealing. The nose which was square at the end, divided into two lobes, and furnished with nostrils that opened widely, had a thoroughly original and individual character; so that Balzac, posing for his bust, commended it to the sculptor, David of Angers; ‘Pay attention to my nose,’ he said; ‘my nose is a world.’ The forehead was handsome, vast, noble, and noticeably whiter than the rest of the face, with no lines but a perpendicular one, which started from the root of the nose, the bump of locality making a very decided projection above the eyebrows. His thick hair, which was long, wiry, and black, was thrown back over his head like a lion’s mane. As to the eyes, there were never any like them; they had a life, a light, an inconceivable magnetism; the white of the eyeballs was pure, limpid, with a blueish tinge, like that of an infant or a virgin, inclosing two black diamonds, dashed at moments with gold reflections, — eyes to make an eagle drop his lids, eyes to read through walls and into bosoms, or to terrify a

furious wild beast, the eyes of a sovereign, a seer, a subjugator.

“ The habitual expression of the face was that of puissant hilarity, of Rabelaisian and monachal joy (the frock no doubt contributing to the idea) which made you think of friar Jean des Entommeures ; but dignified withal, and uplifted by a mind of the first order.

“ As usual, Balzac had risen at midnight, and had worked until my arrival. His features showed no sign of fatigue, except that of a slight brownness beneath the eyelids, and he was gayety itself during the whole breakfast. Little by little, the conversation turned on literature, and he complained of the difficulties of the French language. Style troubled him much, and he sincerely thought he had none ; it is true that at this time the critics, as a rule, denied him any. The school of Hugo, lovers of the sixteenth century and the middle-ages, learned in form, rhythm, structure, periods, rich in words, trained in prose by the gymnastics of verse, following always a master under certain fixed conventions, thought little of any writing that was not ‘ well written ; ’ that is to say, elegant in tone and polished beyond measure ; and they thought, moreover, that the presentation of modern manners was useless, vulgar, and wanting in ‘ lyricism. ’ Balzac, in spite of the vogue he was beginning to acquire with the public, was not admitted among the gods of romanticism, and he knew it. Though they read his books eagerly enough, they did not dwell on the serious aspect of them ; in fact, even to his admirers, he was long ‘ the most prolific of our novel-writers, ’ and nothing more. This seems amazing to us now, but I can answer for

Hand of Balzac.

From the original plaster cast, belonging to M. le Vte. de
Spoelberch de Lovenjoul.



Model by P. H. H. & Co.

the truth of it. Consequently, he took unwearying pains to form his style, and in his great anxiety for correctness he would consult those who were far inferior to him. He told me that before putting his name to any of his books he had written under various pseudonyms a score of volumes 'to unlimber his hand.'

"But to return to the breakfast. While talking, Balzac played with his knife or his fork, and I noticed that his hands were of rare beauty, the hands of a prelate, white, with tapering, dimpled fingers, the nails polished and rosy. He cherished his hands, and smiled with pleasure when any one looked at them, attaching a sense of race and aristocracy to their beauty. Lord Byron said in a note, with visible satisfaction, that Ali Pasha complimented him on the smallness of his ear, from which he had inferred he was a gentleman. Such a remark about his hands would have pleased Balzac more than any praise of his books. He had, in fact, a slight prejudice against those whose extremities were clumsy.

"I left him, after agreeing to write for the 'Chronique de Paris' (he was then starting it), in which appeared my 'Tour en Belgique,' 'La Morte Amoureuse,' the 'Chaine d'or,' and other works. Charles de Bernard, another of the young men whom Balzac called to his assistance, wrote his 'Femme de quarante ans' and the 'Rose jaune' for the 'Chronique.' Balzac had lately invented the 'woman of thirty;' his imitator added two lustres to that already venerable age, and his heroine had an equal success.

"Whoever knew Balzac familiarly is able to find in the *Comédie Humaine* a crowd of curious details on his character and on his work, — more especially in his first

books, in which he had not entirely freed himself from his personality, and lacking *subjects* to observe, he dissected himself. For instance, the story of *Facino Cane* contains precious indications of the life he led in his garret as a young aspirant of fame. They are doubly precious because they throw light on one side of Balzac's life which is very little known, and reveal in him the consciousness of that powerful faculty of intuition which he possessed in so high a degree, and without which the realization of his great work would have been impossible. Balzac, like Vishnu, the Hindu god, possessed the gift of *avatar*, — namely, that of incarnating himself in different bodies, and of living in them at his pleasure; with this difference, that the number of Vishnu's avatars is limited to ten, while those of Balzac are innumerable; and what is more, he could evoke them at will. Strange as it may seem to say so in this nineteenth century, Balzac was a Seer. His power as an observer, his discernment as a physiologist, his genius as a writer, do not sufficiently account for the infinite variety of the two or three thousand types which play a rôle, more or less important, in his human comedy. He did not copy them; he lived them ideally. He wore their clothes, contracted their habits, moved in their surroundings, *was themselves* during the necessary time. Through this faculty came those sustained and logical characters, which never contradict and never duplicate one another; personalities endowed with a deep and inmost reality, who, to use one of his own expressions, *compété* for their civil rights. Red blood flows in their veins in place of the ink which ordinary writers infuse into their creations.

“And yet Balzac, immense in brain, penetrating physiologist, profound observer, intuitive spirit, did not possess the literary gift. In him yawned an abyss between thought and form. Sometimes he despaired of ever crossing it. Into it he flung volume after volume, nights of toil without number, essay upon essay, without ever filling the gulf; a whole library of unacknowledged books went into it. A less robust will would have been discouraged and overcome; but Balzac, happily, had unshaken confidence in his genius, which all others ignored. He willed to be a great man, and he became one, by the incessant projection of that fluid, more powerful than electricity, of which he has made such subtle analysis in *Louis Lambert*.

“Contrary to the writers of the romantic school, who were all remarkable for the fearlessness and facility of their execution, producing their fruits almost at the same time as their flowers (a double forth-putting which seemed involuntary), Balzac, the equal of them all in genius, could not find his method of expression, or found it only after infinite labor. Hugo says, in one of his prefaces, with his Castilian pride: ‘I do not understand the art of soldering a fine thing over a defective one; I correct the defect in another volume.’ But Balzac riddled with erasures his tenth proof; and when he found me sending back to the ‘Chronique’ the proof of an article (written in a flash at the corner of a table) with no corrections except the typographical ones, he could not believe, however satisfied he might be otherwise, that I had done my best. ‘It might have been better if you had gone over it two or three more times,’ he would say.

“ He used to preach to me a curious literary hygiene, with himself for an example. I ought to shut myself up for two or three years, drink water, eat vegetables like Protogenes, go to bed at six o'clock, get up at midnight and work till morning, employ the day in reviewing, expanding, pruning, improving, polishing the work of the night; correcting proofs, taking notes, making the necessary studies, and, above all, living in the most absolute chastity. He insisted much on this last recommendation, rather rigorous for a young man of twenty-five. According to his ideas true chastity developed to the highest degree the powers of the mind, and gave to those who practised it mysterious faculties. When I timidly remarked that the greatest geniuses had not deprived themselves of love, of passion, nor even of pleasure, and cited a few illustrious names, Balzac shook his head and answered: ‘They would have done greater things without them.’

“ It must not be thought that he was jesting in prescribing these rules, which even a Trappist would have thought strict. He was perfectly convinced of their efficacy, and spoke with such eloquence that I did, on several occasions, conscientiously try this method of obtaining genius; I got up at midnight, took the inspiring coffee (made after a special formula), and sat down at my writing-table, — on which sleep made no delay in dropping my head. ‘*La Morte Amoureuse*’ was my only nocturnal production.

“ With his profound instinct for reality, Balzac perceived that the modern life he wished to paint was governed by one mighty fact, — MONEY. Assuredly no man was ever less avaricious than he, but his genius

made him foresee the immense part about to be played by that metallic hero, more interesting to modern society than the Grandisons, the Des Grieux, the Werthers, Laras, Renés, and Quentin Durwards. At the period when the first novels signed by his name appeared, the world had not, in the same degree that it has to-day, the absorbing interest, or I might better call it, the fever, of gold. California was not discovered; a few miles of railway were all that existed, and no one suspected their future; they were looked upon as a new species of *montagne russe*, then fallen into disuse; the general public were ignorant of what we now call 'business;' bankers alone gambled at the Bourse. The movement of capital, the glitter of gold, the calculations, the figures, in short, the importance given to money in novels, hitherto taken for mere romantic fictions and not for serious pictures of life, astonished the subscribers of the circulating libraries, and the critics set to work to add up the sum total expended or brought into action by the author. The millions of old Grandet were discussed arithmetically; and sober-minded men, excited by the enormity of the totals, threw doubts on Balzac's financial ability, — an ability which was, however, really great, and so admitted, later. Stendhal says, with disdainful foppishness of manner, 'Before sitting down to write I always read three or four pages of the Code civil to tone me up.' Balzac, who knew so much of money, found poems and dramas in the Code. The bankruptcy in *César Birotteau* stirs us like the history of the fall of an empire. The struggle between the château and the cottage in *Les Paysans* presents as many vicissitudes as the siege of Troy.

But these new elements introduced into a novel did not please at first. Philosophical analysis, elaborate pictures of character, descriptions, of a minuteness which seemed to have in view a distant future, were thought of grievous length, and more often skipped to follow the story. Later, it was seen that the author's purpose was not to weave the intrigues of a complicated tale, but to paint society as a whole, from summit to base, with its living beings and its inanimate things. Then it was that people began to admire the immense variety of his types. I think it is Alexandre Dumas who calls Shakspeare 'the greatest creator after God.' The words might be applied, with even more justice, to Balzac; for never, in truth, did such a number of living beings issue from any other human brain.

“About the year 1836 Balzac conceived the plan of his *Comédie Humaine*, and attained to a full consciousness of his genius. He then attached the works already written to his general idea, and gave them their place in the philosophical categories he had marked out. Some novels of pure fancy did not fit in very well, in spite of the hooks afterwards attached to them; but these were mere details, lost in the immensity of the whole, like the ornaments of another style in a noble edifice.

“I have said that Balzac worked laboriously, and, stubborn founder that he was, returned the metal to the pot a dozen times if it did not completely fill the mould. Like Palissy, he would have burned the furniture, the floors, even the beams of his house to keep up the fire of his furnace, and forego no experiment. The severest necessities never induced him to deliver a work

on which he had not spent his last effort ; he gave many admirable examples of this literary conscientiousness. When, sitting before his table in his monkish robe in the silence of the night, with the white sheets lying before him, on which fell the light of seven candles, which he always used concentrated by a green shade, he forgot all, and then began a struggle greater than that of Jacob with the angel, that of form and idea. In the morning, when he issued from that battle, wearied but not vanquished, the fire being out and the atmosphere of the room chilly, his head smoked and his body exhaled a sort of mist like that we see from a horse in winter. Sometimes a single sentence would occupy a whole night. It would be made and remade, twisted, kneaded, hammered, lengthened, shortened, written in a dozen different ways, and, singular to relate, the proper form, the absolutely best, did not present itself until after all approximative forms had been exhausted. No doubt the metal did often flow with a fuller and freer current, but there are very few pages in Balzac which are identical with the first copy.

“ His method of proceeding was as follows : When he had long borne and lived a subject, he wrote, in a rapid, uneven, blotted, almost hieroglyphic writing, a species of outline on several pages. These pages went to the printing-office, from which they were returned in placards ; that is to say, in detached columns in the centre of large sheets. He read these proofs attentively ; for they already gave to his embryo work that impersonal character which manuscript never possesses ; and he applied to this first sketch the great critical faculty with which he was gifted, precisely as

though he were judging of another man's work. Then he began operations; approving or disapproving he maintained or corrected, but, above all, he *added*. Lines started from the beginning, middle, or end of sentences, and made their way to the margins on the right or left or top or bottom, leading to amplifications, insertions, deletions, epithets, and adverbs. After some hours' work the paper might have been taken for a drawing of fireworks by a child. Rockets, darting from the original text, exploded on all sides. Then there were crosses, simple crosses, crosses re-crossed like those of a blazon, stars, suns, Arabic figures, letters, Greek, Roman, or French, all imaginable signs mingled with erasures. Strips of paper, fastened on by wafers or pins, were added to the insufficient margins, and were rayed with lines of writing, very fine to save room, and full themselves of erasures; for a correction was hardly made before that again was corrected. By this time the original proof had almost disappeared in the midst of this apparently cabalistic scribble, which the compositors passed from hand to hand, each unwilling to do more than one hour of Balzac.

“The following day the proofs came back, all corrections made, and the bulk of course doubled. Balzac set to work again, — always amplifying; adding here a trait, there a detail, a picture, an observation of manners, a characteristic word, an effective sentence; pressing the idea more and more into the form, and getting always nearer to his inward conception; choosing, like a painter, from three or four outlines the final line. Often this tremendous labor ended with an intensity of attention, a clearness of perception of which

he alone was capable. He would see that the thought was warped by the execution ; that an episode predominated ; that a figure which he meant should be secondary, for the general effect, was projecting out of his plan. Then with one stroke of his pen he bravely annihilated the result of four or five nights of labor. He was heroic at such times.

“I have seen at Les Jardies, on the shelves of a bookcase which contained only his own works, each different proof of the same book bound in a separate volume, from the first placard to the finished volume ; and the comparison of Balzac’s thought in its various stages was a curious study and contained many useful literary lessons. Near to these volumes, by the bye, was a shabby old book of unpleasant appearance, bound in black morocco without punches or gilding, which attracted my attention. ‘Take it down,’ said Balzac, ‘it is an unpublished work of mine, and has its value.’ It bore the title *Comptes Mélancoliques*, and contained a list of all his debts, the dates at which his notes fell due, the bills of his tradesmen, and the whole array of threatening documents which the Stamp legalizes. This volume, as if in derisive contrast, stood side by side with the *Contes Drolatiques*, ‘to which they are not the sequel,’ said Balzac, laughing.

“In spite of this laborious manner of working, Balzac produced a great deal, — thanks to his superhuman will assisted by the temperament of an athlete and the seclusion of a monk. When he had some important work on hand he would write sixteen or eighteen hours out of the twenty-four for two or three consecutive months ; he granted to his animality only six hours’ sleep, which

was heavy, feverish, and convulsive from the torpor of digestion caused by his hasty meals. At such times he disappeared completely; even his best friends lost trace of him. Then he would reappear as if from under ground, flourishing his work over his head, laughing his hearty laugh, applauding himself with perfect naïveté, and bestowing on his work the praises he asked of none. No author was ever so indifferent to articles and criticisms on his books. He left his reputation to make itself without raising a finger to help it, and never did he court the journalists.

“ Sometimes he would come to my rooms of a morning, breathless, tired-out, giddy with the fresh air, like Vulcan escaping from his forge, and fling himself on the sofa. His long night’s work had made him hungry, and he would pound up sardines and butter, making a sort of pomade of them which reminded him of the *rillettes* of Tóurs, and spreading it on bread. It was his favorite food; and he had no sooner eaten it than he fell asleep, telling me to wake him at the end of an hour. I paid no attention to this request; on the contrary, I stopped the noises of the house to prolong that well-earned sleep. When Balzac woke of himself and saw the twilight gathering its gray tints upon the sky, he bounded up, called me a traitor, thief, assassin; I had made him lose ten thousand francs; if he had been awakened he should have followed out the thread of a story which would have brought him in at least that sum, without counting reprints; I had made him miss rendezvous with bankers, editors, duchesses; he should be too late to take up a note; that fatal sleep might cost him millions. But I was well accustomed

to his hyperboles, and consoled myself readily when I saw how the fine Tourainean color had come back to his rested face.

“The great Goethe held three things in horror, one of which was tobacco-smoke. Balzac, like the Jupiter of the German Olympus, could not endure tobacco under any form; he anathematized a pipe and proscribed cigars; he would not even allow of the smallest Spanish *papelito*; the Oriental narghile alone found favor in his sight, and then only as a curious *bibelot* possessing local color. His philippics against Nicot’s herb were not like those of a certain doctor who, during a dissertation on the horrors of tobacco, took plentiful pinches from a snuff-box beside him. Balzac never smoked. His *Traité des Excitants* contains an indictment in form against tobacco, and there is no doubt that if he had been sultan, like Amurath, he would have cut off the heads of relapsed or refractory smokers. He reserved all his excesses for coffee, which did him so much harm and perhaps killed him, though he was organized for a centenarian.¹

“In 1839 Balzac was living at Chaillot in the rue des Batailles, a house from which he had a fine view of the course of the Seine, the Champs de Mars, the École Militaire, the dome of the Invalides, a large part of Paris, and the slopes of Meudon. He had surrounded himself with some luxury knowing that in Paris no one believes in poverty-stricken talent, and that a well-to-

¹ We may add to these personal traits that he never carried money or a watch. Sometimes this brought him into difficulties. He would walk into Paris from Les Jardies and have no means of paying his fare back, or getting a dinner.

do appearance often leads to doing well. To this period belong his passing fancy for dandyism and elegance, the famous blue coat and gilt buttons, the cane with the turquoise knob, the appearance at the Bouffes and the Opera, and his more frequent visits in society, where his sparkling wit and animation made him welcome, — useful visits, moreover, for they gave him more than one model. It was not easy to make one's way into his house, which was guarded like the garden of the Hesperides. Two or three passwords were necessary, which were changed frequently, for fear they should become known. I remember a few. To the porter we said, 'The plum season has come,' on which he allowed us to cross the threshold. To the servant who rushed to the staircase when the bell rang it was necessary to murmur, 'I bring some Brussels lace;' and if you assured him that 'Madame Bertrand was quite well,' you were admitted forthwith. This nonsense amused Balzac immensely; and it was perhaps necessary, to keep out bores, and other visitors still more disagreeable.

“One of Balzac's dreams was of friendship, — heroic, devoted friendship; two souls, two valors, two intellects blended in one will. That of Pierre and Jaffier in Otway's 'Venice Preserved' had always struck him and he often talked of it. His *Histoire des Treize* is this idea enlarged and complicated, — a powerful unity, composed of several persons, all acting blindly for one agreed end. Real life and intellectual life were never as defined and separate in Balzac as in other authors, and his creations often followed him from his study. He wished to form an association in the style of that

which united Ferragus, Montriveau, Ronquerolles, and their companions; only there was no question of their bold strokes, — the actual plan confining itself to something much simpler, as follows: A certain number of friends were to stand by each other on all occasions; they were to work according to their capacity for the success or the fortunes of whichever one of them might be designated, — with return of service, of course. Much delighted with his scheme, Balzac recruited auxiliaries, whom he brought into relations with each other with as many precautions as though the matter concerned a political society or a branch of the Carbonari. When the number was complete he assembled the adepts and explained the object of the society. Needless to say that all declared their satisfaction without discussion, and the statutes were voted with enthusiasm. No one possessed the gift of stirring, super-exciting, intoxicating even the coolest heads and the sedatest minds like Balzac. He had an overflowing, tumultuous, seductive eloquence that carried you off your feet whether you would or no; no objections were possible against him; he would drown them in such a deluge of words that you had to be silent. Besides, he had an answer for everything, and he would fling you a glance, so flashing, so illuminated, so charged with electric fluid that he infused his desires into your mind.

“The association, which counted among its members Granier de Cassagnac, Léon Gozlan, Louis Desnoyers, Jules Sandeau, Merle (known as the handsome Merle), myself, and some others whom it is useless to name, was called *Le Cheval Rouge* [the Red Horse]. Why the Red Horse, you will ask me, any more than the

Golden Lion or the Maltese Cross? The first meeting of the associates took place at a restaurant, on the quai de l'Entrepôt, at end of the pont de la Tournelle, the sign of which was a quadruped *rubricâ pictus*; and this had given Balzac the idea of the name, which seemed sufficiently queer, unintelligible, and cabalistic.

“When it was necessary to discuss some project Balzac, elected by acclamation grand master of the Order, sent a faithful messenger to each *horse* (the slang appellation the members went by among themselves) with a letter, in which was drawn a small red horse, and the words ‘Stable, such a day, such a place.’ In society, though we all knew each other (most of us for half our lifetimes), we were to avoid speaking, or else meet coldly, to escape all suspicion of connivance. Sometimes in a salon Balzac would pretend to meet me for the first time, and then, with winks and grimaces such as actors use for their asides, he would seem to be saying: ‘See how well I play my part.’

“What was the object of the Cheval Rouge? Was it organized to change the government, establish a new religion, found a school of philosophy, rule men, seduce women? Very much less than that. We were to get possession of newspapers, invade the theatres, seat ourselves in the armchairs of the Academy, win a string of decorations, and wind up modestly as peers of France, ministers, and millionnaires. All that was easy — according to Balzac; it was only necessary to have a perfect mutual understanding; such commonplace ambitions ought to prove to us the moderation of our characters.

“ I smile to myself as I here betray, after so many years, the secret of this literary free-masonry, — which had no result whatever. But, at the time, we took the thing seriously; we imagined we were the *Treize* themselves, and felt surprised that we could not pass through barriers as they did; but the world is so ill-contrived! After four or five meetings the *Cheval Rouge* ceased to exist, most of the horses being unable to pay for their oats in the symbolic manger; and the association, organized to obtain all things, was dissolved because the members often lacked fifteen francs, the cost of the reckoning. Each therefore plunged back alone into the battle of life, fighting with his own weapons; and this explains why it was that Balzac never belonged to the Academy, and died a *chevalier* only of the Legion of honor.

“ The idea, nevertheless, was a good one. Others, who adopted it, put it in practice without the same romantic phantasmagoria, and succeeded.

“ I am writing my recollections of Balzac just as they come to me, without attempting to give connection to that which cannot be connected. Moreover, as Boileau has told us, ‘ transitions are the great difficulty of poetry,’ and, I may add, of essays, — but modern journalists have not the conscience, nor the leisure, of the Parnassian legislator.

“ Madame de Girardin was one of the women who professed a great admiration for Balzac; he was fully alive to it, and showed his gratitude by frequent visits, — he so chary, and rightly too, of his time and his hours of labor. No woman ever possessed in a greater degree than Delphine, as we allowed ourselves

to call her familiarly among ourselves, the art of bringing out the qualities of her guests. With her they were always at their best, and they left her salon astonished at themselves. No pebble so unpolished but what she could strike a spark from it, and on Balzac, as you may well believe, there was no need to strike the flint long; he sparkled instantly, and flamed up. Balzac was not precisely a conversationalist, quick in reply, flinging a keen or decisive word into the discussion, changing the subject imperceptibly as the talk flowed on, touching all things with a light hand, and never exceeding a quiet half-smile. On the contrary, he was full of animation, eloquence, and an irresistible *brio*; and, as every one stopped talking to listen to him, conversation in his presence was apt to degenerate into soliloquy. The point of departure was soon forgotten,—he passed from anecdote to philosophical reflection, from social observations to local descriptions; and as he spoke his cheeks would color, his eyes become strangely luminous, his voice took many inflections, and sometimes he would burst out laughing at the droll apparitions which he *saw* before he spoke of them. At the least provocation his natural gayety broke forth, swelling his strong chest; it sometimes disturbed the squeamish, but they were all forced to share it, no matter what efforts they made to keep their gravity. Do not think, however, that Balzac ever sought to amuse the gallery; he simply yielded to a sort of inward intoxication,—sketching with rapid strokes and with comic intensity and incomparable drollery the fantastic images that were dancing in the dark chambers of his brain. At the time when he was writing *Un Début dans la vie* he wanted proverbs for

his *rapin* Mistigris, and Madame de Girardin, on the other hand, was also in search of sayings for the famous lady with the seven little chairs in the 'Courrier de Paris.' My help was occasionally called in; and if a stranger had entered the room and seen Delphine, with her white fingers thrust through the meshes of her golden hair, profoundly thinking, and Balzac sitting on the arm of a big chair (in which Émile de Girardin was usually asleep), his hands at the bottom of his trousers pockets, his waistcoat rubbed up over his stomach, one foot dangling with rhythmic motion, his face expressing by its contracted muscles some extraordinary struggle of the mind, and me, curled up among the cushions of the sofa like an hallucinated theriaki, — this stranger, I say, would never have suspected what we were about; he would have thought that Balzac was dreaming of another *Lys*, Madame de Girardin of a rôle for Rachel, and I of some sonnet. Ah, the good evenings which can never come again! Who would then have believed that grand and superb woman, carved in antique marble, that sturdy, robust, apparently long-lived man, who had within him the vigor of a wild boar and a bull, half Hercules, half faun, and was framed to see a hundred years, would soon be laid to sleep, one at Montmartre, the other in Père-Lachaise, and I should alone remain to record these memories already so far away, and about to perish forever unless I write them down?

“Balzac had the makings of a great actor in him. He possessed a full, sonorous, resonant voice, which he knew how to moderate and render soft at will, and he read admirably, — a talent lacking to most actors. When he related anything he played it, with intonations, facial

expressions, and gestures which no comedian ever excelled, as I think. On one occasion, at Les Jardies, he read us *Mercadet*, — the original *Mercadet*, fuller and more complicated than the play afterwards arranged for the Gymnase, with tact and ability, by d'Ennery. Balzac, who read like Tieck, without indicating either acts or scenes or names, assumed a special voice perfectly recognizable for each personage. The organs with which he endowed the various creditors were of spleen-dispelling comedy; they were of all kinds, hoarse, honied, hurried, drawling, threatening, plaintive. This one yelped, that one mewed, others growled and grumbled and howled, in tones possible and impossible. In the first place, Debt chanted a solo, presently sustained by a vast chorus of creditors; they came from everywhere, — from behind the stove, from under the bed, from the drawers of the bureau; the flue of the chimney vomited them; they squeezed through the key-hole; some scaled the window like lovers; others sprang, like a jack-in-the-box, from a trunk, — 't was a mob, an uproar, an invasion, a tidal wave. In vain Mercadet tried to shake them off, others came to the assault, and far on the horizon dark swarms of creditors were suggested, like legions of ants making for their prey. I don't know whether the play were better so, but no representation of it ever had the same effect upon me.

“ During this reading of *Mercadet* Balzac, who had sprained his ankle by slipping on his steep property, lay on a sofa in the salon of Les Jardies. Some sharp thing passing through the covering pricked his leg, and annoyed him. Picking it out, he said, ‘The chintz is too thin, the *hay* comes through.’ François, the Caleb

of this Ravenswood, not liking any jest on the splendors of the manor, corrected his master and said 'the horse-hair.' 'Then that upholsterer has cheated me!' cried Balzac; 'I particularly told him to put hay. Damned thief!'

"The splendors of Les Jardies, however, existed only in dreams. All Balzac's friends remember how they assisted in decorating the walls (left in the bare plaster or covered with gray paper) by writing thereon, 'Rosewood panels,' 'Gobelin tapestries,' 'Venetian mirror,' 'Picture by Raphael.' Gérard de Nerval had already decorated an apartment in the same way. As for Balzac, he really imagined it was all gold and marble and silk,—but, though he never furnished Les Jardies, and though he did sometimes make his friends laugh with his chimeras, he has built himself an eternal dwelling, a monument more durable than bronze or marble, a vast city, peopled with his creations and gilded with his glory.

"No one can pretend to write a complete biography of Balzac. All relations with him were broken into from time to time by gaps, absences, disappearances. Work ruled his life; and he had, with a very kind and tender heart, the selfishness of a hard worker. Who would have dreamed of being angry with him for negligence or apparent forgetfulness after seeing the results of his flights and seclusions? When, the work accomplished, he reappeared, you would have thought he had parted from you the night before; he took up the interrupted conversation as though six months had not elapsed. He travelled much in France to study the localities where he placed his provincial and his country scenes;

and he stayed with friends in Touraine or La Charente, where he found a peace his creditors did not always let him have in Paris. Occasionally, after some great work was finished, he allowed himself a longer excursion, to Germany, Northern Italy, or Switzerland; but such journeys rapidly made, with anxieties about notes falling due, work to deliver, and a limited viaticum, often harassed him more than they rested him.

“Contrary to the habit of many illustrious literary men who are fed by their own genius, Balzac read a great deal and very rapidly. He loved books, and had collected a fine library which he meant to bequeath to his native town, until the indifference of his compatriots towards him made him relinquish the idea. He absorbed in short time the voluminous works of Swedenborg belonging to his mother, who was occupied in studying mysticism at one period. To this we owe *Séraphita*, one of the most wonderful productions of modern literature. Never did Balzac approach — never did he clasp ideal beauty so closely as in this book. The ascent of the mountain has indeed something ethereal, supernatural, luminous, which lifts you above this earth. The only colors he employs are the blue of the heavens and the white of the snow, with pearly tones for shadows. I know nothing more entrancing than that opening. The panorama of Norway with “its serrated edges like a granite lace” seen from those heights, dazzles me and gives me vertigo. *Louis Lambert* shows the same influences; but soon Balzac, who had taken wings from the mystics to soar into the infinite, returned to this earth on which we dwell; though his strong lungs were able to breathe the

subtile air which is death to feebler beings. After these flights he returned from that upper-world to our lower life ; perhaps his noble genius would too quickly have passed from sight had he continued to rise to the immeasurable immensities of the science of mind, and we ought to consider it a fortunate thing that *Louis Lambert* and *Séraphita* were the only doors he opened into the world invisible.

“As years went on his hard life of nocturnal work did, in spite of his strong constitution, leave certain traces on Balzac's face ; and I find in *Albert Savarus* a portrait of him, drawn by his own hand, which describes him as he was in 1842, with slight modifications, — fewer kilograms of weight, for instance, as became the man beloved by the Duchesse d'Argaiolo and Mademoiselle de Watteville. This story, one of the least known and least quoted of all his books, contains many details on his habits of life and work ; one might even find, if it were allowable to lift the veil, confidences of another nature.

“Balzac, who has painted women so marvellously, must have known them well. In one of his letters to his sister, written when he was quite young and completely unknown, he reveals the ideal of his life in two words, ‘to be famous and to be loved.’ The first, which all other artists seek, was realized from point to point. Did the second meet with its fulfilment? In the opinion of those who were most intimate with him he practised the chastity he recommended to others. During our intimacy, which lasted from 1836 until his death, only once did Balzac make allusion, in the tenderest and most respectful terms, to an attachment of

his early youth; and even then he only told me the first name of the woman whose memory, after so many years, brought the moisture to his eyes. But, had he told me more than he did, I would certainly not abuse his confidence; the genius of a great writer belongs to the world, but his heart is his own. I pass lightly over this tender and delicate side of Balzac's life, — all the more that I have nothing to say of it that does not do him honor. His reserve and silence were those of an honorable man. If he was loved as he desired in his dreams, the world has known nothing of it.

“Do not imagine after this that Balzac was austere or prudish in language; the author of the *Contes Drolatiques* was too imbued with Rabelais, too pantagruelist himself not to have his merriment; he knew good stories, and could invent them; his indecorous jollity, interlarded with Gallic plain-speaking, would have frightened the canting, and made them cry out, ‘Shock-ing!’ But those laughing, loquacious lips were silent as the grave where serious feelings were concerned. Scarcely did he allow his nearest and dearest to guess at his love for a foreigner of distinction, — a love which I may speak of here because it was crowned by marriage. It was this passion, dating back a long while, which explained his distant journeys, the object of which was a mystery to his friends until almost the last of his life.

“About the year 1844 it was that Balzac first began to show a taste for old furniture, chests, pottery, and Chinese vases. The smallest bit of worm-eaten wood which he bought in the rue de Lappe always had some illustrious beginning; and he made out circumstantial

genealogies for all his *bibelots*. He concealed them here and there, on account, he said, of his creditors, in whose reality I was beginning by this time to lose faith. I even amused myself by spreading a report that Balzac had become a millionaire, and that he bought old stockings of the ragman in which to keep his ounces, doubloons, Genoese gold-pieces, and double-louis, after the manner of Père Grandet. I told everywhere of his three vats, like those of Aboucasem, filled to the brim with carbuncles and dinars and omans. 'Théo will get my throat cut with his nonsense!' said Balzac, provoked and delighted.

"What gave some color to my joke was the new residence which Balzac had lately bought in the rue Fortunée, quartier Beaujon, then less populated than it is now. Here he occupied a mysterious little house which sheltered the new fancies of my sumptuous financier. When you made your way into this retreat, which was not at all easy, for the master of the house denied himself to visitors, you beheld a vast number of luxurious and comfortable details much in contradiction to the poverty he affected. He admitted me one day, and showed me first a dining-room, panelled in old oak, with table, mantelpiece, buffets, shelves, and chairs in carved wood, fit to rouse the envy of Berruguete, Cornejo Duque, or Verbruggen; then a salon in gold damask, with doors, cornices, plinths and window-casings in ebony; a library, with ranges of shelves inlaid with tortoise-shell and copper in the style of Boulle; a bath-room done in black and yellow marble, and finished in stucco; a dome-roofed boudoir full of old pictures restored by Edmond Hédouin; and a gallery lighted

from above, which I recognized later in *Cousin Pons*. All sorts of curiosities were on the *étagères*; Dresden and Sèvres porcelains, and specimens of pale-green crackle. On the staircase, which was covered by a carpet, were tall Chinese vases and a magnificent lantern suspended by a red-silk cord.

“‘You certainly *have* emptied one of Aboulcasem’s vats!’ I said, laughing. ‘You see I was right in calling you a millionaire.’

“‘I am as poor as ever,’ he replied, with a deprecating air; ‘nothing of all this is mine. I have furnished the house for a friend whom I am expecting. I am only the porter of the hotel.’

“I quote his actual words. He made the same answer to other persons, who were as much puzzled as I was by it. The mystery was soon after explained by his marriage with a lady whom he had long loved.

“Posterity has begun for Balzac; every day his fame grows greater. When he mingled with his contemporaries he was ill-appreciated; he was seen only by fragments and under aspects that were often unfavorable. Now, the edifice that he built rises higher and higher as we recede from it—like the cathedral of some town, hidden at its base by clustering houses, but seen on the horizon in all its vastness above the diminished roofs. The building is not completed; but such as it is, it awes us by its immensity, and future generations will ask who was the giant who raised those mighty blocks and constructed that Babel in which a whole society is humming.”

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS SISTER'S NARRATIVE CONCLUDED.

I AM obliged, though unwillingly, to speak of a lawsuit which my brother was compelled to institute in 1836 against the "Revue de Paris," in relation to *Le Lys dans la Vallée*. Not that I wish to revive enmities, God forbid! but this suit affected his life too seriously to allow me to pass it over in silence; it reduced him, for a time, to the distress and anxiety of his first literary years just as he was about to triumph over them, by depriving him of the support of reviews and newspapers, and by exciting much malevolence against him.

The facts were these: While *Le Lys dans la Vallée* was in course of publication in the "Revue de Paris," friends in St. Petersburg informed my brother that the work was being published in full in that city, though less than half had been issued in Paris. Supposing that this was done without the knowledge of the editor, Honoré hastened to inform him of the injury to their mutual interests. He then discovered that the editor himself, believing no doubt that he acted within his rights, was directing the publication in Russia. My brother objected; the editor became angry, and would not listen to any amicable arrangement. Honoré then

told him that he should take the case to the courts and ask for a legal decision on the rights of authors. He would not allow such a wrong to pass, for it might be made a precedent in future years as much to the injury of his brother-writers as to his own.

To bring such a suit as this was daring a great deal; for whether won or lost it was certain to have fatal consequences to Honoré independently of the question of money, which was so important to him; for no one could doubt that the "Revue" would close its columns to him and become his enemy. Such considerations, however, could not stop him, and he brought the suit. What was his amazement when his antagonist appeared in court armed with certificates of good repute and *literary honor*, signed by nearly all his brother-writers, whose interests as well as his own he was endeavoring to defend at his personal risk and peril. Honoré was deeply hurt at what he thought disloyalty. For a long time he divided his fellow-authors into two camps: those who had signed and those who refrained from signing. And when his anger was over the want of logical common-sense in the former still provoked him.

His rights were evident, however; he won the case, and with it a great many enemies.

This lawsuit, together with the book entitled *Illusions perdues*, in which he has drawn a picture of the feuilletonists, exasperated the press against him; and, so bitter are literary hatreds, even his death has not disarmed them all. He troubled himself very little about such attacks, and he often brought us the papers or periodicals in which the worst appeared, and read us the articles.

“Just see what a state of mind those fellows are in,” he would say. “Fire away, my dear enemies, the armor is proof: it saves advertising; your praises would leave the public indifferent, but your insults will wake them up. Don’t they howl! If I were rich, people might say I paid them. However, we mustn’t say a word; if they get the idea they are doing me good they are capable of holding their tongues.”

We thought otherwise, and the attacks troubled us.

“How silly you are to take them to heart,” he would say. “Can critics make my work good or bad? let time, the great umpire, show; if these fellows are wrong the public will see it some day or other, and injustice then becomes a benefit to those it has injured. Besides, these guerillas of art hit true sometimes; and by correcting the faults they point out my work is improved, — in fact, I really owe them some gratitude.”

Therefore he would make neither remonstrance nor explanations. Once only he broke the rule of silence he had laid down for himself by writing the *Mono-graphie de la presse*. This work, sparkling with wit in every line, was wrung from him by his friends; they accused him of weakness, almost of cowardice; he showed his claws to oblige them; but he afterwards regretted the work, which wronged, he thought, his character if not his talent.

The fatal consequences of this struggle with the “*Revue de Paris*” are told in the following letter, written from the rue des Batailles, at Chaillot, where he lived after leaving the rue Cassini, and before he inhabited Les Jardies:—

“Your husband and Sophie came yesterday, and ate a horrible dinner in my bachelor’s den at Chaillot; it was the more unseemly because the kind brother had been running about all day on my account.

“I have just concluded a good arrangement with the ‘Estafette.’ The other journals will come back to me some day; they need me. Besides, have they taken my brain-fields from me, or my literary vineyards, or the woods of intellect? are there not other publishers to fall back on? Some publishers, not understanding their real interests (that is incredible to you, is n’t it?), prefer books which have not appeared in a periodical. This is not the time to enlighten them; though it is quite clear that a previous publication saves them the cost of advertising, and that the more a book is known the better it will sell.

“Don’t fret therefore; there is no danger as yet in the domicile; I am tired, it is true, even ill, but I have just accepted Monsieur de Margonne’s invitation to spend two months at Saché, where I shall rest and take care of myself. I shall attempt something dramatic, while I finish *Père Goriot* and correct *La Recherche de l’Absolu*. I shall begin with *Marie Touchet*; it will make a strong piece in which I can bring strong characters on the stage.

“I will not sit up so late; don’t worry too much about that. Let us be just; if troubles have given me a liver-complaint I have come honestly by it. But halt there, Mistress Death; if you do come, let it be to shift my burden, for I have not yet accomplished my task! Don’t therefore worry yourself too much, Laure; the sky will come blue again.

“The *Médecin de Campagne* is being reprinted; it was out of print; that’s nice, is n’t it?”

“The widow Bechet¹ has been sublime; she has taken upon herself four thousand francs for proof corrections, which really belonged to me; that’s nice, too, is n’t it?”

“Rely upon it, if God grants me life, I shall have a noble place in the future, and we shall all be happy. Let us be merry, my good sister; the house of Balzac shall triumph! Shout it aloud with me, very loud, that Dame Fortune may hear us, and for God’s sake don’t fret.”

The letter which follows shows him in one of those moments of discouragement which no artists, however vigorous in mind they may be, can entirely escape.

“I am so sad to-day that there must be some sympathetic cause for such sadness. Can it be that some one I love is suffering? Is my mother ill? Where is my good Surville? is he well, body and soul? Have you news of Henry, and is it good? You and your little ones, can it be that any of you are ill? Write me at once and ease my mind.

“My dramatic attempts are doing badly. I shall give them up for the present. Historical drama requires great scenic effects, which I know nothing about, and which, perhaps, I could only find out in a theatre with intelligent actors. As for comedy, Molière, whom I wish to follow, is a disheartening master; it takes days upon days to attain to anything good of that kind, and time is always lacking to me. There are,

¹ His new publisher.

besides, such innumerable difficulties to conquer before I can handle even one scene ; and I have not the time to give to tentatives. A masterpiece alone, together with my name, would open the doors of a theatre to me, and I have not attained to masterpieces. Not being willing to risk my reputation, I should have to find an intermediary — more time lost, and the worst of it all is I have not any time to lose. I regret giving up the stage ; dramatic work is more productive than books, and would sooner bring me out of my trials. But hardships and I took each other's measure long ago ; I have conquered them in the past and I will conquer them again. If I succumb, it is because Heaven wills it, and not I.

“The painful impression my distresses make upon you ought to prevent me from telling you of them ; but how can I help relieving my over-full heart by pouring it out to yours? Yet it is wrong to do so. It takes a more robust organization than you women have to bear the tortures of a writer's life.

“I work harder than I ought to, but how can I help it? When at work I forget my troubles, and it is that which saves me ; but you, you forget nothing. There are persons who are offended by this faculty, and they add to my sufferings by not comprehending me.

“I ought to insure my life, to leave, in case of death, a little fortune to my mother. All debts paid can I meet the costs? I must see about this on my return.

“The time during which the inspiration of coffee lasts is lessening. It now excites my brain for only fifteen days consecutively, — fatal excitement, too, for it gives me horrible pains in the stomach. That is the same time that Rossini assigns to its stimulus.

“Laure, if I wear out every one about me I shall not be surprised. An author’s life is never otherwise; but to-day I have the consciousness of what I am and what I shall be. What strength it needs to keep one’s head sound when the heart suffers thus. To work night and day, and see myself constantly attacked when I need the tranquillity of a cloister to do my work! When shall I have that peace? Shall I ever have it for a single day? only in the grave, perhaps. They will do me justice there; I like to think so. My best inspirations have ever come to me in moments of extreme anguish; they will shine upon me still —

“I stop; I am too sad; heaven should have given a happier brother to so affectionate a sister.

My brother was then overwhelmed by a great heart-sorrow.¹ I cannot publish any parts of his correspondence except that which relates to himself and his books, or shows him under the aspect of son and brother. These restrictions deprive the public of many interesting pages, especially those which he wrote me after the death of a person very dear to him. I have never read anything so eloquent as the expression of that grief.

A friend allows me to print the following letters, by which the reader can judge of my brother in his friendships: —

“MY DEAR DABLIN,² — Here is the corrected manuscript and the proof-sheets of the *Chouans*. As soon

¹ The death of Madame de Berny.

² Monsieur Théodore Dablin was a rich ironmonger of the rue Saint-Martin, who had the tastes of an artist and a generous heart. He was one of Balzac’s most faithful friends, and often helped him in his early days with advice and also with means.

as I put my name to any of my compositions I destined this one for you. But the chances which rule the fate of books decreed that the *Chouans* should not be reprinted since 1834 until now, though many persons have thought the book better than its reputation. If I were of those who make their mark upon their epoch this dedication might be of value in future years; but neither you nor I know the solution of that enigma. Therefore consider it only as a proof of the friendship which remains in my heart, though you have not cultivated it for many years. Ever yours."

The dedication of the *Chouans* reads thus: "To the first friend, the first work."

"MY DEAR DUBLIN, — My sister tells me that an expression which escaped me has hurt your feelings. It would be knowing me very little to think me a half-friend. It is nearly eighteen years since that Easter day when, passing through the place Vendôme between you and Monsieur P. le H., close to the column, I (being then very young) felt and said what I could be some day. You said that honors and prosperity changed men's hearts. I answered that nothing could change mine in its affections. That is true; I have been false to none; to-day all those who have been my true friends are on a footing of a perfect equality. If you saw more of me you would know this. I have remained very much of a child in spite of the reputation I have won; only I have the selfishness of a hard worker. Sixteen hours a day given to the construction of a great work, which will one day be gigantic, leaves me little time to dispose of. This deprivation of the pleasures of the heart is the heaviest tax I pay to the

future. As for the pleasures of the world and of life, art has killed them all without one regret from me.

“I think that intellect and feeling make all men equal. Therefore, my friend, never again put into the singular what I say of the masses. I have been four times to your house to see you and you are off I don't know where. If I am unable to soothe your wounded heart in person, this letter will tell you how great my astonishment was when my sister told me I had hurt you.

“Adieu; a long letter like this is a luxury to me. Heartfelt regards, and ever yours.”

My brother, going four times to find Monsieur Dablin, who lived at a great distance, to assure him that a rough remark which escaped him in a discussion was said without the slightest personal meaning, was certainly not a lukewarm friend.

The letter which follows was addressed to my friend Mme. Carraud, in answer to one from her on the *Physiologie du Mariage*, which incurred her displeasure.

“The feeling of repulsion which you had on reading the first pages of the book I sent you, is too honorable and too delicate for any mind, even that of the author, to be offended by it. It proves that you do not belong to a world of duplicity and treachery, that you know nothing of a social existence which blasts all things, and that you are worthy of a solitude where man is ever great and noble and pure. It is perhaps unfortunate for the author that you did not overcome that first feeling which naturally seizes an innocent heart at the

hearing of a crime, the picturing of evil in the language of Juvenal, Rabelais, Persius, or any other satirist of the same kind. Had you done so I think you would have been reconciled to the book after reading certain strong lessons, certain vigorous pleas in behalf of *woman's* virtue.

“ But I cannot blame you for a repugnance which does you honor. How could I be hurt with you for belonging to your sex? I therefore humbly ask your pardon for the involuntary offence, against which, if you remember, I had warned you; and I beg you to believe that the severe judgment you pronounce upon the book cannot alter the sincerity of the friendship you suffer me to feel for you. . . .

“ Forgive me, dear, my jokes about the money earned by writing. They have shocked you; but they were really as boyish as a great deal that I do and say. Do you think money really compensates for my work and health? No, no! If my imagination runs away with me sometimes, I soon come back to the noble and the true; do believe that.

“ I am now writing for the ‘*Journal de l'Europe Littéraire,*’ where I have a note of five thousand francs to meet. At the time that journal came near failing literary men pledged themselves to help it. It is the last time I will involve myself in that way. I ought not, in order to do good to some, to do wrong to others.”

My brother was serious in all his thoughts, and it must not be supposed (as many have imagined) that the learning and the science on which he touches from time to time in his books were lightly studied and then

forgotten. What he knew he did not know superficially; where he was ignorant he naively admitted his ignorance; and when he had to treat of certain subjects which he had not studied, he consulted those who specially understood them, and was careful to acknowledge openly the service they had rendered to him. There was pride, perhaps, in such acknowledgments. He was capable of thinking that nothing but lack of time kept him from knowing everything.

His constant desire for money, which has been so often blamed, will be, I think, understood and justified by the circumstances I have related. He wanted money in the first place to pay his debts to all. He who craves it from such a motive deserves, surely, the respect of others. My brother, entering life through misfortunes, struggled bravely against the storm like the Portuguese poet, lifting high above the waves that threatened to engulf him the Work he expected should give him fame. Such circumstances still further magnify that work. It is therefore with a feeling of pride that I have here narrated his misfortunes.

I find a letter of this period which refers to his work. It is dated from La Boulonnière, a little estate near Nemours, where he afterwards placed the scene of his *Ursule Mirouët*.

“*La Fleur des pois* [subsequently called *Le Contrat de mariage*] is finished. I have succeeded, I think, in what I wished to do. The single scene of the signing of the marriage contract shows the future of the couple. You will find in it a touch which I think intensely comic; the struggle between the young and the old notariat. I

have managed to attract attention to a discussion of that act. This book is one of the chief scenes in the series of private life ; later, I shall write the *Inventaire après décès*, in which the horrible mingles with the comic. Appraisers ought to know a good deal about human turpitude ; I shall make them talk. . . .

“All you write about my purchase of the bit of ground at Ville-d’Avray does not affect it. You don’t seem to understand that that piece of real estate is an investment which represents what I owe to my mother ; I have not the time to discuss it now ; but I will convince you when we meet.”

The attacks against my brother increased rather than lessened ; the critics, unable to repeat the same things forever, changed their batteries and accused him of immorality. It was the best means in their power of doing him harm, and of alienating the public, who began to be alarmed and to manifest ill-will against the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. His works were forbidden in Spain and in Italy, more especially in Rome. Immorality, which is easy to judge of in actions, is difficult to define in works of art. Are not pictures of vice as instructive on the stage or in books as pictures of virtue? What writer, unless it be Florian or Berquin, has escaped the charge of immorality from contemporary critics? It is the resource of such critics when they have nothing to say on the literary value of works. Molière was their target for his *Tartufe*, Richardson for his *Lovelace*, that brilliant and vicious man. What did they not say about the house to which *Lovelace* takes *Clarissa*? What outcries followed the *Manon Lescaut* of *Provost*!

These accusations were very injurious to my brother; they grieved him deeply, and sometimes they disheartened him.

“Those men persist in ignoring the *ensemble* of my work in order that they may pick the details to pieces,” he said. “My blushing critics veil their faces before certain personages in the *Comédie Humaine*, who are, unfortunately, as true as the others and set in strong relief in my vast picture the morals of the present day. There are vices in our time as there were in former times. Do they wish, in behalf of innocence, that I should vow to purity all the two or three thousand personages who figure in the *Comédie Humaine*? I should like to see them in action! I did n’t invent the Marneffes, male and female, the Hulots, the Philippe Brideaus whom everybody elbows in our worn-out civilization. I write for men, and not for young girls. But I defy them to cite a single page in which religion or the family is attacked. Such injustice revolts the soul and saddens the heart! What tortures success is made of!” he added, dropping his head in his hands. “But after all, why complain?”

Is it not, in truth, a condition of superiority that such minds shall be tortured? Is not their crown too often of thorns, which the vulgar acclaim ironically, denying their kingship until the day when death gives them immortality? My brother has said somewhere in his works that “Death is the consecration of genius.”

It is right, however, to say that if Balzac was often wounded by those who wilfully misrepresented his ideas and his character, and also by those who really did not comprehend him; he sometimes met with triumphs which

avenged him for injustice. One only of these triumphs can I relate here.

One evening, in Vienna, he was entering a concert-room when the whole audience rose to salute the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. As he passed through the crowd on his way out, a young man seized his hand and put it to his lips, saying: "I kiss the hand that wrote *Séraphita*!"

"There was such enthusiasm and conviction in that young face," Honoré said to me, "that the sincerity of this homage went to my heart; they may deny my talent if they choose, but the memory of that student will always comfort me."

The man is doubtless still living; should these words meet his eye he will perhaps be glad to know that he gave a joy to the great writer, a joy which he garnered in his memory.

The letters which I have given will enable the public to judge of the ardor of his mind and the warmth of a heart that no disappointments ever chilled. To read his correspondence makes one giddy; how labors, hopes, and projects succeed each other! what activity of mind! what courage, reborn incessantly! what riches of organization! If sorrows of the heart (which were not lacking to him) or weariness of mind and body caused some discouragements now and then, how he conquered them, recovering immediately his robust energy, and that strength for work which never failed him!

The Balzac of society was no longer the man who had poured out his troubles to his family in his talk and letters. In the world he was amiable, brilliant, and knew so well how to conceal his cares that he

passed for the equal of the prosperous; conscious of his own intellect he willingly took precedence of others. His poverty he proudly concealed, because he did not wish for pity; had he felt himself freer in action, more independent of other men, he would proudly have avowed it. It was through misfortune that Balzac came to have his knowledge of social life. Guided by the genius of observation he roamed the valleys and the heights of the social state; studied, like Lavater, on the faces about him the stigmata which express to the eye all passions and all vices; collected his types in the human bazaar like an antiquary; chose his curiosities, evoked his types in places where they were useful to him; placing them on the first or the second plane according to their value; distributing light and shade with the magic of a great artist who knows the power of contrasts, — in short, he imprinted on each of his creations the names, features, ideas, language, and character that belong to them, and which give them such individuality that amid that teeming crowd not one is confounded with another.

He had a singular theory about names; declaring that invented names did not give life to imaginary beings, whereas those that were actually borne endowed them with vitality. He found those that he took for the personages in the *Comédie Humaine* wherever he walked, and he would come home radiant when he had made some good capture of this kind.

“ ‘Matifat!’ ‘Cardot!’ what delightful names!” he said to me. “I found ‘Matifat’ rue de la Perle, in the Marais. I see my Matifat! he’ll have the wan face of a cat, and a *little* corpulence; because a Matifat can’t

have anything stupendous, you know. And Cardot? that's another matter — he is a little bit of a man, dry as a pebble, lively and jovial.”

I can quite comprehend his joy in finding the name of Marcas ; but I suspect him of inventing the “ Z.”

Knowing the fidelity of certain of his portraits drawn from nature, — for if he took their names from the living he also took their characters, — we were sometimes frightened by the likenesses, and dreaded the fresh enmities we feared he would excite.

“ How silly you are ! ” he would say, laughing and shrugging those strong shoulders which did truly bear a world. “ Do people know themselves? Are there any mirrors that reflect the moral being? If a Van Dyke like myself painted me I should probably bow to myself as if to a stranger.”

Sometimes he audaciously read his types to those who had posed for them. His audience would highly approve, and while we were looking on, full of anxiety, and thinking that they could not fail to recognize their portrait, they would say: “ How true those characters are ; you must have known Monsieur ——, or Monsieur Such-a-one ; that's the very image of them, an actual portrait ! ”

Side by side with those who were unable to recognize themselves were others absolutely convinced that certain characters in the *Comédie Humaine* were theirs. How many women have believed that they inspired his Henriette ! My brother never drew any of these dear deceived ones from the pleasant error which made them so ardent in his defence. Let this silence be forgiven him, for he had need of such devotion.

No author ever made his plans and combinations so far beforehand, or ever bore them longer in his brain before writing them. He has carried to the grave more than one book fully formed, which he reserved for the days of the maturity of his talent, startled himself at the vast horizons it opened before him.

“I have not yet reached the point of perfection necessary to touch those great subjects,” he said.

The *Essai sur les forces humaines*, the *Pathologie de la vie sociale*, the *Histoire des Corps Enseignants*, and the *Monographie de la Vertu*, were the titles of some of these books, the pages of which, alas! remain forever blank.

Those who know literary art, and who study the works of Balzac, no longer accuse him, as they once did, of following mere chance or some aimless purpose. He did occasionally, in obedience to certain necessities of execution, change a few details, but never the plan of a book, always laid down long in advance. No writer ever chained down so rigidly to the rules of work that prodigious fertility and facility with which nature had endowed him.

“One should distrust those gifts,” he said; “they sometimes lead to sterile superabundance. Boileau was right; we must continually prune the style, which alone gives permanence to a work.”

The love he had for perfection, and his deep respect for his own talent, and for the public, led him to work too much over his style. Excepting a few books written under so happy an inspiration that he scarcely retouched them (such as *La Messe de l'Athée*, *La Grenadière*, *Le Message*, *La Femme Abandonnée*), it was

only after correcting successively eleven or twelve proofs of the same sheet that he gave the "order to print," impatiently awaited by the poor compositors, so wearied by his corrections that they could each do only one page at a time of his writings. While he was thus requiring so many proofs of one sheet, and reducing by a great deal his own profits (for publishers would no longer bear the cost of his corrections) he was accused by his traducers of a mercantile spirit in the printing of his books. The compositors who printed them must have laughed if they heard this. When injustice becomes grotesque there is nothing else to do; and attacks of this kind did not trouble my brother. What annoyed him far more was to hear those who did not understand his work pretend to praise it.

His least labored books — those which won for him early in his career the title of the "most prolific of our novelists" — were those which gave him his reputation. Sheltered by that humble title, which did not imply any great superiority and excited no jealousy, he was able to print his more serious works, for which, without this reputation, he might not have succeeded in getting a publisher. He did not like men to judge him only by those novels and tales the horizons of which were limited. To many persons, specially those of academic tastes, Balzac was only "the father of Eugénie Grandet." That was as far as such persons went with him, and beyond that they allowed him neither capacity nor fame. I do not feel to that book as my brother did; and I do not approve of diminishing the merits of such a literary gem, which has been justly compared to a painting of Mieris, or Gerard Dow; but I do think

that many of his books surpass it in mental depth, if they cannot surpass it in truth and in finish of execution.

The title "most prolific of our novelists," which was useful to him in the beginning, was injurious in some respects, and especially in this, that Balzac remained unknown to men of serious minds, who thought this prolific writer unworthy to occupy even their leisure hours; while, on the other hand, more frivolous persons, who fed upon novels exclusively, skipped as wearisome or digressive, the serious parts of his books, for which the fictitious parts were often only the setting; consequently, many of those who read the *Comédie Humaine* knew no more about it than those who never read it at all.

Thus it was that Balzac did not at first obtain the place to which he has a right on the book-shelves of thinkers, beside Rabelais and Shakspeare and Molière, through his glorious relationship to those great spirits.

Friends and relatives who followed Balzac from the cradle to the grave can say confidently that this man, so clear-sighted, so lucid in thought, was confiding and simple as a child in his amusements, sweet-tempered and gentle even in his darkest days of discouragement, and so amiable in his home that life was good beside him. The man who wrote the *Curé de Village*, *Les Parents pauvres*, and *Les Paysans* was like a school-boy in the holidays when he took his recreation. He sowed his morning-glories along the garden wall at Passy, watched for their blooming in the morning, admired their colors; went into raptures over the jewelled armor of some insect; rushed through the Bois

de Boulogne to Suresnes (where we were then living) to play a game of boston with his family, among whom he was more of a child than his niéces; laughed at puns, envied the lucky being who had the "gift" of making them, tried to do so himself, and failed, saying regretfully, "No, that does n't make a pun." He used to cite with satisfaction the only two he had ever made, "and not much of a success either," he avowed in all humility, "for I did n't know I was making them" (we even suspected him of embellishing them afterwards). *Proverbes retournés*, which at one time were much the fashion in the studios, occupied him much; he was luckier with them than with the puns; he composed several for his favorite Mistigris (*Début dans la Vie*) and for Madame Crémère in *Ursule Mirouët*. "A wife should be the working caterpillar of the household" gave him as much delight as his finest thoughts. "None of you people would have thought of that!" he said to us.

He composed mottoes for our lotteries, under which we hid the lots, and would rush in quite joyful when he thought he had some good ones.

"An author is good for something," he said quite seriously.

The music-master, Schmucke, and the banker, Nucingen, whom he made to speak German-French, amused him not less than his dear *rapin* Mistigris and Madame Crémère. He laughed the tears into his eyes when he read to us what he made them say in their terrible jargon.

Much has been said, and not without reason, of his excessive self-satisfaction; but it was so frank, and

withal so well justified, that those who knew him preferred it to that false humility which often covers far more pride. How could we help forgiving self-satisfaction in the man who had put his name to the *Médecin de Campagne*, the *Recherche de l'Absolu*, the *Curé du village*, and so many other great works, when the conviction of his talent could alone give him the patience and strength necessary for the creation of such works? It would have been better, no doubt, had he repressed this naïve enthusiasm for himself; but it would have been asking the impossible of a man of his frankness and vivacity of feeling. Moreover, we can see in his letters how swiftly doubts followed his greatest satisfactions; and they were just as sincere as his self-conceit. At such times he would ask anxiously if we thought his works (which were shortening his days) would make him live longer than other men in the minds of his fellows.

But it must not be supposed that his self-love was deaf and could not hear the truth. We might say to him plainly, "Such a thing is bad, in our opinion." He would begin by exclaiming, arguing, abusing us perhaps, and declaring that the particular part thought bad was precisely the best in the book. But if, in spite of his anger, we held firm and maintained our own opinion, this firmness made him reflect; he had not lost a single one of our remarks and observations; he weighed them and he judged them in the solitude of his toilsome nights, and he would come back in the morning to press the hands of the friends who cared for him enough to tell him the truth.

"You were right," or, "You were wrong," he would

say with the same good faith, having as much gratitude in the one case as in the other. And it was such friends whom he really preferred, in spite of his self-conceit. He was the first to laugh at that conceit and to let others laugh, and he was moreover very clever in discovering the value of praise and was never duped by unmeaning flattery. He was simple and confiding, but he could not be a fool.

He admired talent wherever he met it,—equally in his friends as in his enemies, and would defend both against all vulgar attacks which calumniated intellect. How many times he protected, without letting it be known, poor unknown authors whose first works chance had thrown in his way; he would go himself to the editors of reviews and journals to say, “That man has a future.” And his opinion carried weight.

An incisive or picturesque phrase sufficed him to present a situation, or the future of a man; and it would be impossible to tell a story better than he, or to talk or read better. In fact, it would not do to let him read his books to you if you wished to judge of the weak spots; he could have made an audience admire the verses of Trissotin.

The egotism for which he has been blamed grew out of his miserable situation and his hard labor. Freed from such pressure he was capable of being helpful to others and devoted; witness the friendships which he retained to the end of his life; and certain young literary aspirants could testify that he gave them, more than once, advice and time, his only property. But he who sacrifices his life to live in the future has the right to withdraw from the demands of society, from all those

little duties which are the life of men of leisure ; and because my brother did so withdraw, he does not deserve to be accused of indifference. The letters which I have cited are a reply to this reproach of selfishness, and will enable the reader to judge of his heart. But more than this, he possessed the art of making himself so beloved that in his presence all grievances which, rightly or wrongly, persons had against him were forgotten, and nothing remained but the affection they felt for him. The servants who waited on him have never forgotten him, and yet he was unable to do for them as he wished. From the poor old woman of whom he speaks in *Facino Cane* (she had taken the place of the “unintelligent Myself”) — who went every morning to the rue Lesdiguères from the far-off purlieus of the faubourg Saint-Antoine, and who used to go and see him wherever he lived afterwards — to François, the old soldier, who was one of his last retainers, all loved him devotedly ; and God knows they had neither leisure nor plenty when they lived with him.

“I don’t know what it is about him, but I’d serve him for nothing,” I have heard one of them say. “You don’t feel tired or sleepy if he wants you, and if he scolds you in return, it is all right.”

As for his friendships, it is quite true, as he wrote to Monsieur Dablin, that he betrayed none and kept them all. Intimate with many of the most remarkable persons of his time, they all took pride in his affection and returned it in kind. More than once he left his work to stay with a sick friend ; with him such claims of the heart took precedence of all others. The allurements he felt to the friends he loved was so great that often when

he went to see them for a moment he stayed hours; then came remorse and admonitions:—

“Monster! wretch! you ought to have been making copy instead of talking!” and more time was lost in adding up the number of hours which such pleasures had cost him,—an exorbitant sum, which, beginning with reasonable figures, attained to the fabulous. “For we must reckon the reprints,” he said.

To sum up all, this great spirit had the graces and the charm of those who shine by amiability alone. His happy and kindly gayety gave him that serenity of soul which he needed to continue his work; but foolish indeed are those who pretend to judge of Balzac in his hours of exuberance; the child-man once at work became the gravest and most profound of thinkers. George Sand, who knew my brother well, has spoken nobly of him, being mistaken on one point only; namely, the extreme sobriety which she attributes to him. Honoré did not deserve that eulogy. Outside of his work, which took precedence of everything, he loved and enjoyed the pleasures of this world; and I think he might have become the most conceited of men had he not also been the most discreet. He, so outspoken in all that related to himself, never committed any indiscretions in his social relations, and faithfully guarded the secrets of others though he never was able to keep his own.

I find in his letters the following appreciation of George Sand, whom he called his “brother George,” doing homage, no doubt, to her virile genius:—

“She has none of the littleness of soul nor any of those base jealousies which cloud so many contempo-

rary talents. Dumas is like her in that respect. George Sand is a very noble friend; and I would consult her with perfect confidence in moments of doubt as to the logical course to take under such or such circumstances. But I think she lacks the critical sense, at any rate loses the first impulsion of it; she allows herself to be too easily persuaded, does not hold firmly enough to her own opinions, or know how to contend against the arguments her adversary brings forward."

My brother used to say, laughingly, in allusion to his want of height, that "great men were nearly always short; probably because the head should be near the heart, so that the two powers which govern the organization should work in harmony."

At home he was always to be seen in a large dressing-gown of white cashmere, lined with white silk, made like the habit of a monk, and fastened round the waist by a silk cord. On his head was the "Dantesque cap" of black velvet, made for him by his mother, which he first took to wearing in his garret, and continued to wear for the rest of his life. According to the hours at which he went out, his dress was slovenly or very neat. If he were met in the morning, wearied with twelve hours' hard work, and rushing to the printers with his hat over his eyes, his beautiful hands hidden in shabby gloves, his feet in shoes with high quarters, that were often outside the loose trousers pleated at the waist and held down with straps, he might have been confounded with the common herd. But if his brow were uncovered, if he looked at a passer-by or spoke to him, the most ordinary of men would remember him. His intellect, constantly exercised, had developed to its highest degree a forehead

naturally vast, the receptacle of many lights! That intellect showed itself also in his first words and even in his gestures. A painter might have studied on that mobile face the expression of all sentiments, — joy, pain, energy, discouragement, irony, hope, or disappointment, — all conditions of the soul were reflected there.

He triumphed over the vulgarity which seems to belong to corpulence by manners and gestures that were full of grace and natural distinction. His hair, the fashion of which he was fond of changing, was always artistic, no matter how he wore it. An immortal chisel has left his features to posterity. The bust which David made of my brother, then forty-four years of age, has faithfully reproduced his noble brow, and that fine hair (the sign of a physical vigor that equalled his moral vigor), the admirable setting of the eyes, the firm lines of his square nose, the mouth with its curved lips, where good-humor and satire met and mingled, and the chin which completed the pure oval of his face before obesity injured its harmony. But marble unhappily could not present those torches of the mind, those brown eyes spangled with gold, like the eyes of a lynx, — eyes which questioned and answered without the help of words, which saw ideas and feelings, and threw out gleams that seemed to issue from an inward source which poured its rays upon the daylight instead of receiving any from it.

Balzac's friends will recognize the truth of these words, which those who never knew him may think exaggerated.

The time may come when I can finish this narrative of my brother's life with an account of his last years.

Portrait of Balzac.

The daguerreotype given to Gavarni, reproduced with the
shirt closed.



If so, its details will be accompanied by letters which will show the change that experience so dearly bought had wrought in that vast intelligence. The Balzac of those years had outgrown his effusiveness, and had become prudent, serious, even grave, but always without misanthropy. I may be able to tell of the last days of a life cut down in the vigor of his age and of his genius, before he had completed his work, just as he hoped for happiness and was about to enjoy a tranquillity long-desired, — a grievous fate, which touched the hearts of friends and enemies alike.

Immense successes, great affections, were the joys of his life; he had also supreme afflictions; nothing is diminutive in the soul of him whom God has endowed with exquisite sensibilities and a great mind. Who shall dare to pity or to envy him?

I have revealed his nature; I have shown him in his private life, in his feelings for his family and friends. I have related misfortunes valiantly fought with, courageously borne. I think I have fulfilled my task by making others respect and love the man in the writer whom they admire. Here ends my obligation to him and to all. Strong souls alone can judge him as an author.

CHAPTER IX.

RETROSPECTIVE.

It has been said that women are the keystone of Balzac's work. This is true; but those who have said it show no conception of its real meaning; and it will be instructive to see what they meant by what they said before calling Balzac himself to testify to the sense in which it is true.

Sainte-Beuve and Jules Janin were the chief critics who in Balzac's lifetime attributed his success to women. In his review of *La Recherche de l'Absolu* Sainte-Beuve says: —

“ In the first place and from the first, M. de Balzac has put in his interests one half of the public, and a very essential half to win. He has made it his upholder by adroitly flattering certain fibres secretly known to him. ‘Woman belongs to M. de Balzac,’ says M. Jules Janin; ‘she is his, — in full toilette, in dishabille, in the most trifling particulars of her daily life. He dresses her and he undresses her. He is a milliner, or rather, he is a mantua-maker.’ And, in truth, what splendid materials he deals in; only they are the worse for wear; spots of grease and oil are on them. M. de Balzac has introduced himself to the sex as a confidant, a consoler, a confessor with a touch of the doctor about him. He knows many things about their sentimental

and their sensual secrets. Like a doctor he enters their bedroom and speaks in a whisper of mysterious details which confuse the modest. A friend of mine suggests that he has the secret arts and sleight of hand of the *accoucheur* or the magnetizer. Many women, even respectable ones, are taken in by this. . . . M. de Balzac has been fortunate enough to come forward at a moment when the imagination of woman has been greatly roused, since the emancipation of July, 1830, by the hopes and promises of Saint-Simonianism."

After Balzac's death Sainte-Beuve added the following to his former opinion : —

"Who has better painted the belles of the Empire? Above all, who has so delightfully sketched the duchesses and viscountesses of the close of the Restoration? — those women of thirty who, having had their day, awaited their painter with vague anxiety; so much so that when they met, he and they, an electric shock of recognition passed between them. . . . The theory of the woman of thirty, with all her advantages and her positive perfections, is a product of to-day. M. de Balzac has invented her; she is one of his most real discoveries. The key of his immense success lies here. For this women have forgiven him much, and they take his word on all occasions because he has, this once, so well understood them."

M. Taine, in his flux of words on Balzac, gives but little space or thought to his work on woman and thus dismisses it : —

"The nature of woman is made up of nervous delicacy, refined and active imagination, native and acquired reserve. This is enough to say that it has almost

always escaped Balzac's comprehension. . . . Wherever there is a deformity or a wound Balzac is there. And what are the promises of happiness and liberty that he offers?—money, carriage, an opera-box. . . . When Balzac tries to paint virtue, religion, or love, he is hampered by their sublimity. . . . His finest portraits of women are elsewhere, among the poor grotesque fools, pretentious, silly or nagging, spurred by the devil's claw which their fat libertine of a father, Balzac, never fails to stick into them. . . . Wherever there is a sore or a deformity Balzac is found in his quality as a physiologist."

Among the critics of the present day Mr. Henry James says, in substance, that Balzac's women are made up of duplicity, — there are few human accomplishments for which he expressed so explicit a respect. "Balzac is supposed to have understood the feminine organism as no one else had done before him; to have had the feminine heart, feminine temperament, feminine nerves at his finger's ends; to have turned the feminine puppet as it were inside out. . . . It may be said that women are the keystone of the *Comédie Humaine*; if they were taken out the whole fabric would collapse. . . . It seems to us that his superior handling of woman is both a truth and a fallacy. To begin with, he does not take that view of the sex that would commend him to the female sympathizers of the day. There is not a line in him that would not be received with hisses at any convention for giving woman the suffrage or admitting them to Harvard College. . . . He takes the old-fashioned view of woman as the female of man, and in all respects his subordinate. . . . Her *métier* may be all

summed up as the art of titillating, in one way or other, the senses of man. Woman has a 'mission' certainly, and this is it."

Women themselves have had no voice in this judgment so far as the public are aware. It is not likely that many could be found to endorse the views just quoted, because, in the first place (and without touching upon the question of Balzac at all) the tone of these remarks is contemptuous of womanhood. They belong to a period of ideas on which is written *passagère*.

When we turn to Balzac himself for their refutation we find that we must go to his life as well as to his books, in order to discover the spirit of his mind towards woman. He was not, as a general thing, in the habit of enunciating principles; he lived them and made his characters live and illustrate them. We may not find a confession of faith on this subject, but enough remains of his words and deeds to show plainly what was his own conception of woman and her relation to man, — what it was, and what it ought to be.

If we look back to the earliest years when a sentiment towards women could enter his soul, we find that nothing could exceed the ardor with which he longed to meet a woman-angel; to him pure love was the coming together of two angelic natures; and these thoughts kept him pure in heart and deed during his adolescent life. The mind that analyzed itself in *Louis Lambert* analyzed this particular belief and developed it in *Séraphita*. In that book Balzac, while dealing with the theories of Swedenborg, went far beyond them in his perception of the one great truth on which the world should hinge were it not out of joint.

He saw early that man is a dual being ; that man *and* woman are needed to express humanity. He saw also that the thread of the Divine which makes man in the image of God is transmitted through woman ; that she is the soul of humanity, regaining full intuition of God. Man is, in himself, not man but male ; unable to bring his powers to bear until he recognizes and appropriates Her as his soul ; through her alone he attains to manhood and is enabled to act. She is the transmitter of the Divine effluence, the inspirer ; he is the worker, the executor. It is not until her qualities of endurance, love, and intuition are added to his qualities of will, force, and intellect that he is a man at all, capable of any hope or any ambition beyond the grovelling and passing life of his threescore years and ten. Receiving this impulse from her, power is born in him, and he ultimates this power, this effluence, in acts.

This is no new doctrine. It has existed through the ages ; for it is the essential truth of all things, and the world is out of joint because we have drifted so far away from it. Each soul is an epitome of it, for sex has only an earthly and limited meaning ; the human soul is man and woman both. Once recognized, and the function of woman admitted, “ there is no height of goodness or knowledge to which she cannot raise the man ; if only he follows her lead and keeps her free from defilement by Matter and Sense, the direct traffic with which appertains to him. In order properly to fulfil her function in regard to man and attract his gaze upward, she must herself aspire continually to the Divine Spirit within her, the central sun of herself as she is that of the man ; and the clearness with which she dis-

cerns and transmits the Divine Spirit depends upon her own purity. If, withdrawing her gaze from it, she fixes her eyes on things without and below, she falls, and in her fall takes him with her. On the other hand, as Soul and Intuition of Spirit, she leads him, physically and mentally, from dissipation and perdition in the outer and the material. She is the vehicle of the Divine Life; the transmitter of virtue, which is courage, the one stable principle of human evolution." — "She is the spiritual element in humanity, lacking union with which man must be chained forever to the material, and waste his energies in struggles and labors which, even when most successful, only carry him farther from the true purpose of life, and render emancipation from carnal conditions more tedious and difficult. Goethe, like Balzac, penetrated to the heart of the great problem in the last scene of the second part of Faust. His *Ewig-Weibliche* is the divine element which woman both embodies and typifies, and to the purifying and stimulating effluence from which Man is indebted for whatever degree of enfranchisement from the clogging embraces of materialism he is able to accomplish. This is the force which *zieht uns hinan*, which lifts us toward higher spheres and inspires us with nobler aims; which on the physical plane keeps before our dull and earth-drawn eyes constant examples of self-sacrifice, altruism, patience, compassion, and love stronger than death; which is most effective in subduing and extirpating the animal tendencies and inclinations from our nature, and in substituting impulses and aspirations which may give us foothold in the path that leads to a life better worth living. In the figure of Séraphita we behold the final

efflorescence of such endeavor during which the dominant impulse has been uniformly spiritual, and through which the carnal elements have been gradually subdued until at length they suffice only to give the mortal form consistency, and to supply the physical means of that inevitable agony of temptation which is the price of translation to the Divine."¹

Much of the misery of the world, possibly all of it, is attributable to the ignorance or the rejection of this vital truth. The ghastly human miseries which come from what we call "unhappy marriages" are explicable when we consider that the world is practically ignorant of this law. All men are now educated to believe that power and the highest knowledge are vested in them; all women are now educated to receive this as true. But mark what happens. A man and woman truly love each other and marry; there is every *a-priori* reason to suppose that a beautiful and solid life in common will be reared. It fails. Why? Because (1) the man unconsciously looks for this power from his wife, all the while consciously acting as if he were (as he has been taught he is) the source of power; and because (2) the woman loyally tries to accept what she has been taught, namely, that he is the source of power and knowledge, when all the while she is learning (unconsciously) that he is not; and because (3) she is seldom clear enough in her mind to think the truth out as it is,

¹ For a further understanding of this subject, which can be only briefly stated here, the reader is referred to the American translation of *Séraphita* and to its introduction. 1 vol. Roberts Bros.: Boston, 1890. Also to "The Perfect Way; or, The Finding of Christ." 1 vol. Scribner and Welford: New York, 1882.

and to recognize early enough her real mission, — which is (applying what has already been said) to transmit illumination and power to him and receive them back from him put into act and use.

Balzac early perceived this truth. It must have come to such a thinker on the threshold of his inquisition into human life. The task lay before him, imposed by the bent of his genius, to exhibit the world to itself under all its aspects, with a picture of its diseases, the secret of its distortions, and the possibility of a return to purity. “In seeing me,” he says in his preface to the *Comédie Humaine*, “collect this mass of facts and paint them as they are, in their element of passionate emotion, some persons have imagined, very erroneously, that I belong to the school of materialists and sensualists. They are mistaken. I put no faith in any indefinite advancement of Society; but I believe in the development and progress of the individual human being. Those who find in me a disposition to look on man as a complete being are strangely deceived. *Séraphita* is my answer to this accusation. In copying the whole of society, and in trying to seize its likeness from the midst of the seething struggle, it necessarily happens that more of evil than of good is shown. Thus some portion of the fresco representing a guilty group excites the cry of immorality, while the critics fail to point out a corresponding part which was intended to show a moral contrast. The day of impartial judgment has not yet dawned for me; and I may add that the writer who cannot stand the fire of criticism is no more fit to start upon the career of authorship than a traveller is fit to undertake a journey if prepared only for

fine weather. I shall merely remark that, although the most scrupulous moralists have doubted whether Society is able to show as much good as it shows evil, yet in the pictures that I have made of it the virtuous characters outnumber the bad. Blameworthy conduct, faults, crimes, have invariably received their punishment, human or divine, evident or secret. In this I have done better than the historian, for I have been free to do so. History cannot, like the novel, hold up the law of a higher ideal. History is, or should be, a picture of the world as it has been; the novel (to use a saying of Madame Necker) *should paint a possible better world.*"

And he goes on to give, with pathetic insistence, a list of the virtuous and irreproachable women who are to be found in his works. Reading that list of women, all strongly individual, nearly all powerful agents in the places assigned to them, we may well wonder that a critic could have found it in his mind to say that Balzac's view of woman's *métier* may be summed up as the art of titillating in one way or another the senses of man. Here are the women in whom Balzac meant to typify the best of human nature, that which has a tendency to uplift and redeem the rest: Constance Birotteau, Engénie Grandet, Ursule Mirouët, Pierrette Lorain, Marguerite Claës, La Fossense, Pauline de Villenoix, Madame Jules, Madame de la Chanterie, Ève Chafdon, Mademoiselle d'Esgrignon, Renée de Mancombe, Madame Firmiani, and many others on the second plane.

The true reason why women are and always have been friends to Balzac, whether as readers and stu-

dents or in actual life, is because he has perceived and asserted their rightful place in humanity. He has endeavored to inspire them with a sense — through awful and revolting pictures, it is true — of the consequences of falling away from it. He preaches through facts, never didactically; but women have seen, more or less consciously, his meaning, and, inspired by a hidden sense within them, they have heard his call to bring about, “a possible better world.” This is a reason which escapes male critics. But it would be quite untrue to assert that such critics are wrong when they say that the women of thirty or forty or any indefinite age are won by the extension which Balzac gives to their period of charm, and by the importance which he assigns to their part in life. On the contrary, all that magnifies their influence and lifts it from the more material plane of youth and beauty, where so many of their perils lie, is justly welcome to women.

The keynote of Balzac as a moralist is therefore his belief that woman is the Soul of man. He early saw the distortions in society caused by the ignoring of this truth, and we must take his word to Madame de Castries and to Madame Carraud (already quoted) that his object in writing the *Physiologie du Mariage*, in 1829, was to awaken ideas favorable to the emancipation and higher education of women and to insist on their natural and inalienable rights. The book is not suitable for translation, — the same medicine not being suited to all constitutions. The Anglo-Saxon mind is shocked by a jeering or jesting moralism, which it calls cynicism. But, under any circumstances, the

subject is not tolerable to the conventions of our day, which would rather not see truth, and when it sees it escapes it by calling it immoral. Tolstói, when dealing with the same subject, conscientiously, in his outwardly brutal and shocking manner, has been tabooed. The day has not come when it can be dealt with; but whosoever shall hereafter deliver a message upon it which shall reach the universal heart and conscience will do a deed for women in which Balzac intended to do, and has done, his part.

At what particular period in his youth these beliefs as to the true nature of woman's influence came to him, it is impossible to say, all records of that period having been destroyed. Whether they were the outcome of the lad's own mind, trained by the meditations at Vendôme and by the noble virginity of the senses of which he speaks in *Louis Lambert*, or whether Balzac was led to this study by a need to understand how and why it was that he derived his own force from a woman, cannot now be told. We know that he placed before his mind many questions derived from the phenomena of his own experience, and there are facts which justify us in thinking that he did so now. Very early in life, not later probably than his twenty-third or twenty-fourth year, he met the woman-angel for whom he longed, and who, thenceforth, inspired his life until some great catastrophe overtook their love. All traces of her name and personality are lost, no doubt destroyed; all letters and records of the period during which she influenced him are missing. Such veils should not be vulgarly pushed aside; happily they cannot be in the present instance; whatever is said must perforce

have the reserve and delicacy with which Balzac himself shrouded his feelings. A few scattered signs alone remain to tell of what he passed through, but they are full of significance ; and a strong retrospective light is thrown upon his mental condition during those years by his letters to Madame Hanska, the love of his later life — for Love, like history, repeats itself.

The most distinct mention of this early love is that by Théophile Gautier (already quoted). Once only did Balzac make allusion to it, and even then he could say no more than the first name of her whose memory so affected him that after many years his eyes still filled with tears. That this love was the influence by which his early life was shaped, that from this woman he derived his force and his ambition, and that their mutual love ended in some great sorrow, no one who studies Balzac's life can doubt. To judge of it we must put ourselves in his place ; we must comprehend the force of his imagination and the excessive sensibility of his spirit. Later, twenty years later, when the thought that he might possibly lose Madame Hanska comes over him, he says : “ If the hope of my life were to fail me, if I lost you, I should not kill myself, I should not make myself a priest, — for the thought of you would give me strength to endure my life ; but I would go to some unknown corner of France, in the Pyrénées or the Ariège, and slowly die, doing and knowing nothing more in this world.”

These words throw a vivid light on the anguish of his mind in earlier years.

He makes a few allusions to this cherished woman in his letters. Speaking of Pauline in the *Peau de*

Chagrin he says: "For me she exists, only more beautiful; if I have made her into a vision it is that no one may be master of my secret." And again, writing to Madame d'Abrantès in 1828, he says: "I have always been crushed beneath a terrible weight. I am sometimes surprised that I have nothing now to struggle against except outward misfortune. You may question all those about me and you will never obtain any light on the nature of my sorrows. There are those who die and the physician himself is unable to say what malady has carried them off." Madame Surville alludes in her narrative to some "great mental shock" in early youth, as the origin of his heart-disease; and he says himself, when writing to his sister in the last year of his life from Madame Hanska's home in the Ukraine, and telling her of the progress of his illness: "These terrible suffocations attack me when distressed, or when I feel an emotion too ardently. My life ought, for my health's sake, to be rose-colored. The origin of this disease was the cruelty of that lady whom you know of."

Théophile Gautier points to *Albert Savarus* as the secret history of this love; and he is doubtless right. Possibly he may have had some private means of judging; the tone of his remark implies as much. *Albert Savarus* is the story of a man's first love for woman, his inspirer, the source from whom he derives his power of action. That this unnamed woman's influence was such to Balzac, and that for years he was *l'ambitieux par amour* — ambitious through love — cannot be doubted. No man could have made the fight that he did, against such odds from within and from without,

from purely personal views of self-development. He must have had some motive power upon him; and if Théophile Gautier is right we may find its nature in that interesting book. What the end was of this great love (which bore fruit in so many of his greatest works) will probably never be known. That it was disastrous is certain. If it did not follow the lines laid down in the story the catastrophe was the same. There is much in his life that connects itself with this,—his seclusion, his craving for solitude, the Trappist robe he wore, the instinctive turning of his soul to Nature as the great consoler.

One quality has been attributed to Balzac which cannot be passed over in silence, all the more because it is especially allied to this early phase of his life. We have already seen how those who knew him most intimately applied the word "chaste" to his nature. Théophile Gautier says (from actual discussion with him) that in his opinion real chastity developed to the highest degree the powers of the mind and gave to those who practised it mysterious faculties; and Gautier further adds that in the opinion of Balzac's most intimate friends he practised the chastity he recommended to others. Without making any assertions on this point, as to which during his middle life there is no evidence either way, it is right to call attention to this opinion of his intimate associates, men who would certainly not have made the same claim for themselves, nor, perhaps, have desired to do so. It is well to remember that this was the impression his nature made upon them; in spite, too, of his jovial gayety and free speech. We may add, as a matter both of fact and of suggestion, that this

characteristic of chastity, which was not a negative thing in a man of Balzac's temperament, but the result of his powerful will, was the secret of his ability to enter into the nature of woman and to apprehend her highest relation to man, — a relation not limited to earth, though rightfully bound by its conditions while this life lasts. An anecdote is told of him which illustrates this point and gives pleasure to the reader of it: —

On some occasion when Balzac happened to be at Marseilles the young men of that town, under the leadership of Méry, gave him a banquet. An eye-witness relates that Balzac arrived punctually, holding in his hand a little snuff-box which he had bought of an antiquary for three hundred francs on his way to the dinner. The descendants of the Phocian colony, feeling it incumbent on them to offer due homage to the great writer, the exponent of woman, turned the conversation upon the sex. Méry, the wittiest of men, was their mouthpiece. He made a brilliant speech, of a free nature, disrespectful to women. Balzac listened and said nothing; he crumbled his bread and played with his snuff-box, with which he seemed much pleased. But when a pause came and he was evidently expected to take up the subject, he replied with such a warm defence of women, made with so much judgment and delicacy that Méry was completely abashed; and the memory of that banquet and of Balzac's defence of womanhood long survived in the memory of those present.

In the midst of the heavy troubles of all kinds which beset Balzac at the opening of his career he had the good fortune to find encouragement, advice, and sympathy in the friendship of several women of rare

distinction of mind and character. First, and paramount among them, was Madame de Berny, whose early death withdrew her, only too soon, from the tender gratitude of her young friend. She was, undoubtedly, the confidant of his early sorrow, and his chief support and means of consolation under it. The destruction, or concealment, of their correspondence was owing to the fact that it concerned those circumstances of his life which he desired to keep secret. In his other letters he makes many allusions to Mme. de Berny, which show his ardent gratitude and deep attachment to her. Those in his letters to Madame Carraud have already been quoted. To another friend he says, speaking of her death: "She whom I have lost was more than a mother, more than a friend, more than any creature can be to another creature. I can explain her only as divinity. She sustained me under great sorrows by words, by actions, by devotion. If I still live it is through her. She has been all to me; and though for the last two years illness and the lapse of time had separated us, yet we were plainly visible to each other from a distance. She re-acted upon me; she was, as it were, my moral sun. Madame de Mortsauf in the *Lys* is a pale expression of her noble qualities; it is but a distant reflection of her, for I have a horror of prostituting my own emotions, and the world will never know the sorrows that overcome me."

He mentions elsewhere that from the year 1821 she had never failed to give him daily two hours of her time, snatched from society, from her family, from her various duties, and from all the attractions of Parisian life. "Twelve years," he exclaims, "of a sublime de-

votion which saved me!" Madame Surville has already told us what he suffered at her death. In her narrative she withholds his letters on the subject; but in one of them, which is included in the *Correspondance*, there is this allusion to Madame de Berny: —

“LES JARDIES, 1839.

“I am alone to face my troubles. Formerly I had one to help me conquer them, — the gentlest and most courageous being upon earth; a woman who is reborn daily in my heart, and whose divine qualities make all other friendships pale by the side of hers. I have no longer an adviser on my literary difficulties, no longer a supporter in the difficulties of life. I have no other guide than the thought, ‘What would she say if she were living?’ Minds like hers are rare. The intimacy which might have been so dear to me between you and me is prevented by your duties as wife and mother. There is only Madame Zulma [Carraud] among those in whom I can trust who has the intellect to play *her* part to me. Never was there a more remarkable mind smothered so completely as Madame Zulma’s; she will die unrecognized in her lonely corner. Madame Hanska could be everything to me; but I cannot be a burden on her fate; and even if I could, I would not, unless she knew well what she was undertaking.”

The following extracts are from his letters to Madame Hanska before her husband’s death, and while his devotion to her did not exceed the limits of a warm and romantic friendship: —

“ PARIS, August, 1835.¹

“ You have been ill! you have suffered! and always *for* and *through* others, — ever the same self-abnegation!

“ If you only remain a short time in Vienna, how shall I send you *Séraphita* and *Le Lys dans la Vallée*? Should you decide to return home at once, give me your exact address. In a country so barren of resources as yours and in the depths of the desert you are about to inhabit perhaps my letters may be more welcome than amid the gayeties you are now enjoying, and which, I fear, they have sometimes interrupted too gloomily. May you never know the bitter sadness that comes of deception, which the sense of loneliness increases; and this at the very moment when we may happen to need the special support of friends. I must own to you that the cruel conviction is growing upon me that I cannot much longer bear up under my hard work. They talk of victims of war and epidemics; but who thinks of the battlefields of art, science, literature, and of the mounds of dead and dying slain by their efforts to succeed? . . .

“ I am, perhaps, on the eve of beginning a political existence which may in time give me a certain influence, even if it does not lead to a high position. But it does not tempt me; for I feel it to be outside of my tastes and my natural habits of mind and character. Certain persons powerful in will and influential in position — statesmen — have approached me on the subject, and two newspapers have sounded me. ‘One of the latter

¹ This is the first letter to Mme. Hanska which has been preserved. Previous letters were burned by a fire which occurred in M. Hanski's house in Moscow. See note to page 290.

has many subscribers, not in France only, but all over Europe. If these papers were united under an intelligent and capable editor, they could become a power. Two other journals would enter the association, and we should found a fifth. The end would be, sooner or later, the triumph of the party they represent. But what ought we to call that party? 'That is the question.' Shall it be the party of men of intellect, or the party of Intelligence? . . . The scheme is a fine one; but to put it into execution is another matter. So I merely listen, and make no reply to the flattering or the merely agreeable speeches addressed to me.

"You ask me to tell you of my daily life. That would be troubling you with many annoyances and vexations. I should have to tell you of an endless series of comings and goings to meet my payments and do my business honorably. Life in Paris involves a frightful waste of time; and time is the material out of which life is made, so they say. When I am not bending over my writing by the light of my candles, or lying exhausted on the sofa, I am rushing breathlessly about on business, sleeping little, eating little, — in short, like a Republican general fighting a campaign without bread or shoes. Solitude pleases me, however; for I hate the social life of the world, which bruises the heart and belittles the mind.

"Do not, I beg of you, make any comparison between the friendship which you inspire and that which you grant. Never allow yourself to imagine that I have ceased to love you; for though I may often be overworked, as I am now, yet in my hours of fatigue and despair, — hours when my energy relaxes, and I sit in

my chair with pendent arms and sunken head, body weary and mind depressed, — the wings of memory still bear me to the cool green shades which refreshed my soul, to her who smiles to me afar off, who has nothing in her heart that is not pure and true, who inspires me, reanimates me, and renews, if I may say so, by the excitement of the soul, those powers to which others give the name of talent. You are all this to me, and you know it; therefore never speak jestingly of my feelings, as you do sometimes.”

“PARIS, October, 1836.¹

“I am depressed, but not utterly cast down; my courage remains to me. The feeling of desertion and the solitude in which I am left grieves me more than my other disasters. There is nothing selfish in me; but I do need to tell my thoughts, my efforts, my feelings to a being who is not *myself*; otherwise I have no strength. I should care for no crown unless there were feet at which to lay the honors men might put upon my head. . . . I have said a long and sad farewell to my lost years, — engulfed beyond recall! They gave me neither complete happiness nor complete misery; they kept me living, — frozen on one side, scorched on the other; and now I am conscious that nothing holds me to life but a sense of duty. I entered on my present phase of life with the feeling that I should die exhausted with my work; but I thought I should bear it better than I do. For the last month I have risen at midnight and gone to bed at six in the evening; and I have forced myself down to the lowest amount of food that

¹ This letter was written after his lawsuit with Buloz, when so many of his literary associates deserted him.

will support me, so as not to weary my brain by digestion. Well, not only do I feel weaknesses which I could not describe to you, but, with so much life driven to the brain, I experience strange things. Sometimes I lose the sense of verticality ; even in bed my head seems to fall to the right or left ; and when I rise I feel impelled by an enormous weight which is in my head. I understand how Pascal's absolute continence and vast mental labor made him see an abyss surrounding him, so that he was obliged to sit between two chairs, one on each side of him.

“ I did not leave the rue Cassini without regret. I do not yet know whether I can keep a part of my furniture to which I am attached, or even my library. I have made, in advance, every sacrifice of lesser pleasures and memories that I may keep this one little joy of feeling that these things are still mine ; they would not count for much in satisfying the thirst of my creditors, but they would slake mine in that march across the sands of the desert on which I am about to start.

“ To show you how good my courage is, I must tell you that *Les Secrets des Ruggieri* was written in a single night ; think of that when you read it. *La Vieille Fille* was written in three. *La Perle brisée*, which ends *L'Enfant Maudit*, was done in a few hours of moral and physical anguish ; it was my Brienne, my Champaubert, my Montirail, in short, my campaign of France ! But it was the same with *La Messe de l'Athée* and *Facino Cane*. I wrote the first fifty sheets of *Les Illusions Perdues* in three days at Saché. What kills me are the proof corrections. The first part of *L'Enfant Maudit* cost me more pains

than many volumes. I wanted to bring that part up to the plane of *La Perle brisée* and make them a sort of little poem of melancholy with which no fault could be found.

“This is the last plaint that I shall cast into your heart ; in my confidences to you there is a certain selfishness which I must put an end to. When you are sad I will not aggravate your sadness, for I know that your sorrows aggravate mine. I know that the Christian martyrs smiled ; and I know, too, that if Guatimozin had been a Christian he would have consoled his minister, and not have answered, ‘ And I — am I on a bed of roses ? ’ A fine saying for an aboriginal ; but Christ has made us more considerate, if not better.

“ Well, adieu ; the day is dawning ; my candles pale. For the last three hours I have been writing to you, line after line, hoping that in each you would hear the cry of a true feeling, deep, infinite as heaven, far above the petty and transitory vexations of this world ; incapable of thinking that it can ever change. What would be the good of intellect if not to place a noble thing upon a rock above us, where nothing material, nothing earthly can ever touch it ?

“ But this thought would lead me too far ; my proofs are waiting. I must plunge into the Augean stable of my style, and sweep out its faults.”

“ PARIS, January, 1838.

“ Now as to the business which takes me to the Mediterranean ; ¹ it is neither marriage, nor anything adventurous, nor foolish, nor light-minded, nor im-

¹ His trip to Sardinia.

prudent. It is a serious and a scientific business, about which I can as yet tell you nothing, because I am pledged to absolute secrecy. Whether it turns out well or ill, as I risk nothing but the journey, which will, in any case, be a pleasure and a change for me, I think I may embark on this enterprise without anxiety.

“ You ask me how it is that I who know so much (as you indulgently say), and can observe and penetrate all things, can also be so duped and deceived. Alas, would you respect me if I were never duped, if I were so prudent, so observing, that no deceptions ever happened to me? But, putting that view of the question aside, I will tell you the secret of this apparent contradiction. You can readily see that when a man becomes an accomplished whist-player and knows after the fifth card is played where all the others are, he should like to put science aside and watch how the game will go by the laws of chance? Just so, you dear and fervent Catholic, God knew that Eve would yield, but he let her alone to do so. Or, if you do not like that way of explaining the matter, here is still another which may please you better. When, night and day, my strength and my faculties are strained to the utmost to invent, write, render, paint, recall; when I take my flight slowly, painfully, often with wounded wing, across the mental spaces of literary creation, how can I be at the same time on the plane of material things? When Napoleon was at Essling he was not in Spain. I do see plainly enough that persons are deceiving me, or that they are going to do so; that such and such man has betrayed me, or will betray me and carry

away a bit of my fleece ; but just at that moment, when I see it all clearly, I am compelled to go and fight elsewhere ; copy has to be delivered ; or some book will be spoiled unless I finish it. . . .

“ I have said for the last twelve years what you now say to me about Walter Scott. Beside him, Byron is nothing, or almost nothing. You are mistaken about the plot of ‘Kenilworth.’ In the opinion of all makers of tales, and in mine, the plan of that work is the grandest, the most complete, the most wonderful of all. It is a masterpiece from that point of view, just as ‘St. Ronan’s Well’ is a masterpiece in detail and patient finish, the ‘Chronicles of the Canongate’ in sentiment, ‘Ivanhoe’ (the first volume, be it said) for its historical quality, the ‘Antiquary’ for poetry, the ‘Heart of Mid Lothian’ for interest ; each of those books has its own particular interest, but genius shines over all. You are right, — Scott will live and grow after Byron is forgotten ; but I speak of Byron read in translation ; the poet in the original must ever live, if only for his form and his impetuous force ; though Byron’s brain never had any imprint on it except that of his own personality ; but the whole world posed before the creative genius of Scott and was there reflected.

“ It is very kind of Monsieur Hanski to imagine that women fall in love with authors. Tell him that I have, and have had, nothing to fear on that score. I am not only invulnerable but secure from attack. The Englishwoman of the times of Crébillon the younger is not the Englishwoman of to-day.

“ I do not read the newspapers ; you can easily believe I have not the time ; therefore I am ignorant of what

you tell me of Jules Janin, who takes, I hear, an attitude of open hostility to me personally and to my works. I am, as you know, indifferent to the blame as well as to the praise of those who are not the elect of my heart, above all to that of journalism, and, generally, to that of what is called "the public." . . . To sum it all up let me say that whenever you hear that I have yielded in matters of principle, honor, and personal self-respect, do not believe it.

"After idling a little for a month, — going two or three times to the Opera, and as often to La Belgiojoso and sometimes to La Visconti (speaking in the Italian fashion), — and having had enough, and too much, of that sort of thing, I am glad to be quit of it and to go back to my work of twelve and fifteen hours a day. When my house is built and I am fairly installed and have earned two or three thousand francs of my own, I have promised myself the reward of going to see you, not, as you say, for a week or two, but for two or three months. You shall work over my comedies and during that time Monsieur Hanski and I will be off to the Indies, astride on those smoky benches you tell me of.

"The Princesse Belgiojoso is a woman wholly unlike all other women, — not attractive according to my ideas; pale with Italian pallor, thin, with a touch of the vampire. She has the good fortune not to please me. With a good mind, she shows it too much; she is always trying for effect, and missing her end by pursuing it with visible care and effort. I first met her five years ago at Gérard's. She came from Switzerland, where she had taken refuge. Since then she has recovered her great fortune, thanks to the influence of our Foreign

Office, and now lives in conformity with her position. Her house is on a good scale, and the talk one hears there is witty. I have gone two Saturdays and dined there once, that is all. . . . Skin-deep affections (*les amitiés d'épiderme*) do not suit me; they weary me, and make me feel more keenly than ever the treasures contained in the hearts that shelter me. In this respect I am not a Frenchman in the lighter acceptance of the word."

" AJACCIO, March 26, 1838.

" DEAR COUNTESS, — This date will show you that I am only twenty hours distant from Sardinia. When I tell you that my present enterprise is a desperate effort to put an end to my business troubles you will not be surprised by it. I only risk a month of my time and five hundred francs for the chance of a great fortune.

"Monsieur Carraud decided me. I submitted certain scientific conjectures to him. As he is a very learned man, who does nothing, publishes nothing, and is lazy, there was no obstruction to his opinion being given, as it was, in favor of my ideas. He says that whether I succeed or do not succeed, he respects the idea as most ingenious. There is no scientific problem he cannot explain if questioned. But the trouble is that these vast mathematical minds judge of life only by what it is; they do not see the logical end of it; and so they await death to be rid of life. This vegetable existence is the despair of Mme. Carraud, who is all soul and fire. She was utterly amazed when she heard Monsieur Carraud propose to go with me, — he who will not leave the house to attend to his own affairs. However, the natural man returned to him and he gave up the project.

“ Here I am, alone in Napoleon’s native town. I have been to see the house where he was born ; it is a poor hovel. I have rectified a few mistakes. His father was a rather rich land-owner, and not a mere clerk, as several lying biographers have said. Also, when he reached Ajaccio on his way back from Egypt, instead of being received with acclamations, as the historians aver, a price was put on his head. They showed me the little beach where he landed. He owed his life to the courage and devotion of a peasant, who took him to the mountains and hid him in an inaccessible place.

“ I am going to Sassari, the second capital of Sardinia, where I shall not stay long, as what I have to do there will take no time at all. The great question will be decided in Paris. All I need to do is to obtain a specimen of *the thing*. You may puzzle your head, most gracious and intelligent lady of the manor, but you will never find out what that means.

“ Corsica is one of the most magnificent countries in the world ; mountains like those of Switzerland, but no fine lakes. France does not make the most of this noble country. It is as large as several of our departments, but does not yield as much as one of them ; it ought to have five million of inhabitants, and there are less than three hundred thousand. We are beginning to make roads and clear forests, which alone are wealth. As the soil is wholly unexplored there may be the finest mines in the world of metal, marble, and coal. Unhappily, the country is not only unexplored, but it is not studied, nor even known, on account of bandits and the savage state into which it has lapsed.”

“ALGHIERO, SARDINIA, April 8.

“I am here after five days in a coral row-boat on its way to Africa, — a good voyage, but I learned the privations of mariners; nothing to eat but the fish we caught, which they boiled into an execrable soup. I had to sleep on deck and be devoured by insects, which abound, they say, in Sardinia. . . . Africa begins here. Already I see a naked population, bronzed like Ethiopians.”

“CAGLIARI, April 17th.

“I have crossed the whole of Sardinia, and seen things such as they tell us of the Hurons or the Polyne- sians. A desert kingdom, real savages, no husbandry; long stretches of palm-trees and cactus, goats browsing on the undergrowth and keeping it down to the level of their heads. I have been seventeen to eighteen hours on horseback (I who have not mounted a horse for the last four years) without seeing a single dwelling. I went through a virgin forest lying on the neck of my horse in fear of my life, for I had to ride through a water-course arched over with branches and climbing plants which threatened to put out my eyes, break my teeth, and even wrench off my head. Gigantic oaks, cork-trees, laurel and heather thirty feet high. Nothing to eat. As soon as I reached the end of my expedition I had to think of returning; so, without taking any rest I rode on to Sassari, where I found a diligence which brought me to this place. I passed through a region where the inhabitants make a horrible bread by pound- ing green acorns and mixing the flour with clay, — and this within sight of beautiful Italy! Men and women go naked, with a bit of cloth to hide their nudity. No

habitation has a chimney ; they make their fires in the middle of their huts, which are full of soot. The women spend their time in pounding the acorns and making clay bread ; the men keep the goats and cattle. The soil is uncultivated in the richest spot on earth. And yet, in the midst of this utter and inexplicable misery, there were villages where the costumes of the peasantry were of amazing richness !

“ I have put off writing to Monsieur Hanski until I reach Milan and can give him some real news. I have thought of you often on my adventurous trip, and I fancy I can hear Monsieur Hanski saying, ‘ What the devil is he doing in that *galère* ? ’ ” ¹

“ MILAN, May 20, 1838.

“ DEAR COUNTESS, — You know all that that date says to me. To-day I begin the year at the end of which I shall belong to the vast, unnumbered company of the resigned. I swore to myself in the days of sorrow, struggle, and faith which made my youth so miserable that I would struggle no more against anything whatsoever when I reached the age of forty. That terrible year has begun for me far from you, far from my own people, in bitter sadness which nothing

¹ It is unnecessary to repeat here in our limited space the story of his disappointment. Madame Surville has given it in her narrative with general correctness, but with one mistake. The discovery that the Genoese had obtained a grant to the mines followed immediately on Balzac's return from his journey, without the delay of a year, as his sister states. He had taken up the idea the previous year when at Genoa. His enthusiasm induced the Genoese to apply for the grant. When Balzac made his journey the following year he was then too late, as he discovered on landing at Genoa.

can dissipate; for of myself I cannot change my fate, and I no longer believe that some fortunate event may modify it.

“ I came here from Genoa on my way to France, and I have stayed on to do a work for which the inspiration has suddenly come to me after I had vainly implored it for several years. I have never read a book in which happy love, satisfied love, has been pictured. Rousseau used too much rhetoric; Richardson preached too much; the poets are too flowery, the novel-writers slaves to fact; Petrarch thought too much of his imagery, his *concetti*, — he saw poetry better than he did women; Pope overdid the grief of Heloïse, — he wanted to make her better than nature, and the better, they say, is the enemy of the good. It may be that God, who created love with humanity, alone understands it. Certainly none of his creatures, as I think, have truly rendered the sorrows, imaginations, and poesies of that divine passion, which every one talks of, and so few have known. . . .

“ I have been sitting on a bench for nearly an hour with my eyes fixed on the Duomo, fascinated by the memories your letter brought to me. What unutterable sadness to be so near you in thought, so far in reality! Ah, dear fraternal soul, the Duomo was glorious, sublime, to me in that hour of June! I lived a lifetime beneath it. . . .

“ I went yesterday to see the Luini frescos at Saronno, and they seem to me worthy of their fame. The one that represents the marriage of the Virgin has a peculiar charm about it; the figures are angelic, and, what is rare in frescos, the tones are mellow and harmonious.”

“PARIS, June 10, 1838.

“ I crossed the Saint-Gothard, with fifteen feet of snow on the path I took ; the road was not distinguishable even by the tall stone posts which mark it. The bridges across the mountain-torrents were no more visible than the torrents themselves. I came near losing my life in spite of the eleven guides who were with me. We crossed the summit at one o'clock in the morning by a sublime moonlight, and I saw the sunrise tinting the snows. A man must see that sight once in his life. I came down so rapidly that in half an hour I had passed from twenty-five degrees below freezing (which it was on the summit) to I don't know what degree of heat in the Vallée de la Reuss. After the horrors of the Devil's bridge I crossed the Lake of the Four Cantons at four in the afternoon. It has been a splendid journey ; but I must do it again in summer, to see all those noble sights under a new aspect. . . .

“ Believe that I have perfect confidence in your literary judgment ; I have made you in that respect the successor of the friend whom I have lost. What you say to me becomes the subject of long and serious meditation ; and I now want your criticism on *La Vieille Fille*. Show neither pity nor indulgence ; go boldly at it. Should I not be most unworthy of the friendship you deign to feel for me if in our intimate correspondence I allowed the petty vanity of an author to affect me? . . . I beg you to be concise in praise, and prolix in criticism. Wait for reflection ; do not write to me after the first reading. If you knew how much instinct, or rather I should say critical genius, there is in what you write to me, you would be proud

of yourself, though you prefer to leave that sentiment to your friends.

“Yes, — now don’t defend yourself; don’t make your familiar little gesture, and hide your eyes with those white and dimpled fingers! — yes, our best contemporaneous critics are not wiser than you. You make me reflect over my work so that I often remodel my ideas on what you say. You will believe this, for you know well that, though I am sincere in all things, I am especially sincere in art. I have none of that paternal foolishness which ties a band round the eyes of so many authors; and if *La Vieille Fille* has no merit, I shall have the courage to cut it out.

“I have been home eight days, and I have made unavailing efforts to take up my work. My head refuses to do any intellectual work; it is full of ideas, but none will come out. I am incapable of fixing my thoughts or of constraining my mind to consider a subject under all its aspects, and so resolving on a course. I don’t know when this imbecility will cease; perhaps it is only the result of having lost my customary habits of work.”

“LES JARDIES, July, 1838.

“At present the house is not furnished, but it will be little by little. Just now I have an old cook of my mother’s and her husband to wait on me.

“I shall stay here till my fortune is made; and I am already so pleased with the life that when I have earned the capital of my tranquillity I think I shall want to finish my days here in peace, bidding farewell, without flourish of trumpets, to all my hopes, aspirations, ambitions, — in short, to everything. The life you lead

— that life of country solitude — has great charms for me. I did want more because I had nothing at all, and once in the domain of illusions, it costs a young man nothing to wish for much. To-day my failure in success has wearied my character,—I do not say my heart, which will ever hope, under all circumstances. . . .

“I must tell you that I have been painfully struck by the extreme melancholy of your religious views. For some time past your letters have seemed to mean, ‘Earth no longer interests me; I have nothing more to do with it.’ You do not know how many deductions, ill-founded perhaps, I draw from this. But, as you say it to me in all sincerity, you must be expressing what you feel; if not, you would be false or distrustful, when you should be all truth with an old friend like me. Even if I displease you, I must say in confidence that I am not satisfied, and that I should like to see you in another state of mind. To seek God in this way means renouncing the world; and I cannot understand why you should renounce it when you have so many ties to bind you to it, and so many duties to fulfil. None but feeble or guilty souls can really take such views.”

NOTE.—This Memoir was written before the publication of Balzac’s letters to Madame Hanska. In those letters he plainly shows that while all his life he sought and longed for his “star,” his ideal love, he had found her only in Madame de Berny, a woman twenty-four years older than himself. This seemed so unlikely a thing that it was natural to suppose that all signs pointed to a younger love. This theory falls to the ground, of course; but the essential point, his life-long search for a “woman angel” remains, and is brought out more strongly than elsewhere in his recently published letters. See “Letters to Madame Hanska;” the last volume of the present translated edition of his Works.

CHAPTER X.

LAST YEARS.

THE last eight years of Balzac's life are contained in the history of his intercourse with Madame Hanska. His health was already failing; although this fact does not seem to have struck the minds of his friends and contemporaries. His robust and vigorous appearance and sunny disposition probably misled them; but in his letters we may trace, unmistakably, that the springs of life were giving way. His own belief in the destructive power of Thought and Will was never more exemplified than in his own experience. This belief he has illustrated again and again in his books, and was now to illustrate in his life. The blade wore out the scabbard.¹

Monsieur Hanski died in the winter of 1841-42, and in August and September of the following year Balzac made his first visit to St. Petersburg, with the result, on his side, of an absorbing love which superseded all other thoughts and hopes in his mind; and on Madame Hanska's side, of an evident affection and a desire for

¹ The reader is referred to the American translation of *La Peau de Chagrin* and its Introduction. Also to the Introduction to the *Études Philosophiques*, nominally by Felix Davin, really by Balzac himself; reprinted in de Lovenjoul's "Hist. des Œuvres de Balzac," page 194.

his allegiance, tempered by a sense of other duties, — duties to her daughter and to her property, — which made her reluctant to consider the question of marriage. It was not until they were at Strasburg together in 1846 that she pledged herself to him; and his letters from 1843 to 1846 betray the injury her doubts and hesitations did to his mind, and probably to his health. Even after the promise had been made she could not be brought to fulfil it; and it was only in 1849 that he felt any assurance that the marriage would take place. Some of the difficulties which Madame Hanska put forward were genuine; others seem to have proceeded from her reluctance to take the final step; though it is quite evident that she never for a moment thought of relinquishing Balzac's devotion.

Among the serious difficulties which beset the marriage was the difference of nationality. It was necessary to obtain the Czar's permission, and this was long withheld. Monsieur Hanski had left his wife an immense landed property and the guardianship of their daughter. Russian law is extremely rigid in its interpretation of such duties. Madame Hanska went to St. Petersburg in the spring of 1843 for the legal settlement of her affairs, and she seems to have then become aware that marriage with a foreigner could not take place without the relinquishment of her whole fortune to her daughter. It is evident that she was a woman of deep natural affections and a devoted sense of duty; no personal considerations of property influenced her, — for in the end she relinquished her fortune, — but her first duty was, obviously, to her child, then a girl of fourteen; and we cannot wonder that she refused to make so

great a change in her own life until the life of her daughter was more developed. The wonder rather is that a woman in her position should have thought of such a marriage at all; for Balzac could offer her nothing but a most unfortunate outward life, — crippled by debt. The fact that she loved him, and that her family loved him and desired the marriage, and treated him with filial respect and affection, is strong testimony to the sort of man he was. His genius, heart, and principles seemed to them to outweigh all other considerations; a testimony which does even more honor to their natures than to his.

When Balzac left Madame Hanska at St. Petersburg, in September, 1843, she promised to meet him the following year at Dresden. The promise was broken; but she made a short visit to Paris in the summer of 1844. She did not go to Dresden till the beginning of 1845, and even then she put obstacles in the way of his joining her until April, when she sent for him. In the following September he again met her at Baden, and by that time the chief obstacle between them was in fair way to be removed, — her daughter Anna being engaged to marry a young Polish nobleman, Comte Georges Mniszeck, the owner of a vast and very beautiful estate in Volhynia, which Balzac describes as another Versailles.

The following winter Madame Hanska, her daughter, and the young count went to Italy, inviting Balzac to accompany them. He met them at Chalons, and together they went to Naples, he himself returning to Paris in January, 1846, but rejoining them in Rome in March of that year. The young couple were married

during the summer, and Balzac was soon after summoned to join Madame Hanska at Wiesbaden. It was during a visit they paid at that time to Strasburg that she first pledged herself to marry him. Later, in the same year, he made her a flying visit of four days at Wiesbaden, which led his lively friend, Madame de Girardin, to call him "il vetturino per amore," — for we must remember, difficult as it may be to do so, that in those days railroads were not.

During these years Balzac's life in Paris had passed through periods of great depression, when he felt himself physically and mentally incapable of hard work; although the necessity for it was even greater than ever; for he now began, silently, and apparently taking no one into his confidence, to prepare for this hoped-for marriage. Little by little, he collected his treasures of rare old furniture, pictures, and works of art of all kinds, and not long after Madame Hanska's pledge was given he bought and remodelled the little house in the rue Fortunée, of which Gautier has told us.

From time to time during these years his natural vigor and his inspiration returned to him. He tells of this joyously, with all his former eagerness; but, as a general thing, the reader feels that his wing is broken. Reference to the chronological list in the appendix to this volume will show the work he did during these years, in the course of which he produced (among other less remarkable tales) three of his greatest books, and one of his noblest characters: *Les Paysans*, the two volumes of *Les Parents Pauvres*, and *Madame de la Chanterie*.

In January, 1847, Madame Hanska came to Paris alone, — the young couple having gone to visit their estates in Poland. Certain allusions in Balzac's letters show that during this visit she identified herself with all his affairs, and approved of the home he was preparing for her. In fact, she was in part its purchaser, and joined with him in filling it with works of art. On her return to Poland in April, Balzac accompanied her as far as Francfort, and in the following September he made his first visit to Wierzschovnia, her home in the Ukraine.

These chronological facts thus baldly stated will serve to explain Balzac's letters which give the best pictures of his life and mind during these years.

“BERLIN, Oct. 14, 1843.

“DEAR COUNTESS,—I arrived here this morning at six o'clock without stopping except for twelve hours at Tilsit. . . . As long as I was on Russian soil I seemed to be still with you, and though I was not exactly gay, you must have seen by my little note from Tanrogen, that I could still make a jest of my sorrows. But once on foreign soil I can tell you nothing, except that this dreadful journey may be made to go to you, but not in leaving you. The aspect of Russian territory, without cultivation, without inhabitants, seemed natural, but the same sight in Prussia was horribly sad,—in keeping with the sadness within me. Those barren tracts, that sterile soil, that cold desolation, that utter poverty, pierced and chilled me. I felt more saddened than if there had been a contrast between the condition of my heart and that of Nature.

“I know how you feel by the way I do. There is a void within me which widens and deepens more and more, and from which I cannot turn my mind. I have given up going to Dresden; I have not the courage. Holbein’s Madonna will not be stolen before *next year*, and then, in the month of May, I shall make the trip with other thoughts in my mind. Don’t blame me for my faint-heartedness. My present journey gives me none of the pleasure I fancied it would when you said to me in Petersburg, ‘Go here,’ and ‘Go there.’ I listened, and went in spirit, for you bade me; but now, how can I help it? away from you, all is lifeless and soulless. Next year, perhaps! but now I have only the gulf of toil before me; and to that I must go by the shortest way.

“This dismal Berlin is not comparable with the sumptuous Petersburg. In the first place, one could cut out a score of mean little towns like the capital of Brandebourg from the great city of the great European empire, and the latter would still have enough left to crush twenty other little Berlins. At first sight Berlin seems more populous. I have seen more people in the streets than we did at Petersburg. Moreover, the houses, without being handsome, seem to me well built. The public buildings, ugly to look at, are of handsome cut stone, with space about them to show their proportions,—that is one trick, no doubt, by which Berlin seems more populous than Petersburg. . . . Berlin and its inhabitants will never be otherwise than a mean little city inhabited by vulgar, fat people; and yet I must admit that to any one returning from Russia, Germany presents an undefinable something

which can only be rendered by the magic word 'liberty,'—expressed in free manners, or rather, I should say, freedom in manner and ways."

"Oct. 16.

"I dined yesterday with Madame Bresson; it was a grand diplomatic dinner in honor of the king's fête-day. Except the ambassadress herself, the guests were all old and ugly, or young and frightful. The handsomest woman, though not the youngest, was the one I took into dinner. Guess who?—the Duchesse de Talleyrand (ex-Dino), who was there with her son, the Duc de Valençay, looking ten years older than his mother. The conversation was wholly made up of proper names and trifling incidents happening at court; it explained to me Hoffmann's ridicule of the German courts. . . .

"Monsieur de Humboldt came to see me this morning, charged, so he said, with the compliments of the King and the Princess of Prussia. He told me how to find Tieck at Potsdam. I want to see Tieck, and I shall take the opportunity to study that barrack of the great Frederick, who was, as de Maistre said, 'not a great man; at the most a great Prussian.' . . .

"Since writing the above I have seen Tieck in his family. He seemed pleased with my homage. There was an old countess present, a contemporary in spectacles, octogenarian perhaps,—a mummy with a green eye-shade, who seemed to me a domestic divinity. I got back to Berlin at six o'clock without having eaten a mouthful since morning. Berlin is the city of ennui. I should die here in a week. Poor Humboldt is dying of it; he pines for Paris."

“DRESDEN, Oct. 19, 1843.¹

“. . . Yesterday, having missed the hour for the Gallery, I wandered over Dresden in all directions. It is, I do assure you, a charming town; far preferable as a residence to that paltry and melancholy Berlin. There is more of the metropolis about it. It is half-Swiss, half-German; the environs are picturesque and charming. I can readily understand why persons should live in Dresden, where there is a mingling of gardens among the houses which refreshes the eye. . . .

“I saw so many Titians in Florence and Venice that those in the Gallery here seemed of less value to me. Correggio's ‘Night’ is over-rated, I should say; but his ‘Magdalen’ and two Virgins of his, the two Madonnas of Raffaele, and the Flemish and Dutch pictures, are alone worth the journey. The famous ‘Trésor’ is nonsense. Its three or four million diamonds cannot dazzle eyes that have just seen the Winter Palace. Besides, a diamond says nothing to me; a dew-drop sparkling in the rising sunlight seems to me a thousand times more beautiful than the finest diamond,—just as a certain smile is more precious to me than the finest picture. It follows that I must come back to Dresden with you to let the pictures have full effect upon me. Rubens moved me; but the Rubens in the Louvre are more satisfying. The true masterpiece of the Dresden gallery is a picture by Holbein which eclipses all the rest. How I regretted that I could not hold your hand in mine while I admired it with that inward delight and plenitude of happiness which the contemplation of the

¹ Unimportant circumstances changed his plans and made him go to Dresden.

beautiful bestows. We are prepared for the Madonna of Raffaele, but Holbcin's Madonna seized me like an unexpected joy.

"It is eleven o'clock at night. I am in a hotel where every one has gone to bed. Dresden is quiet as a sick-room. I have no desire to sleep. Have I grown old, that the Gallery gave me so few emotions? Or is it that the source of my emotions has changed? Ah, truly, I perceive the infinitude of my attachment and its depth by the void there now is in my soul. For me, to love is to live; I feel this, I see it more than ever now; all things prove it to me; I recognize that never again can any taste, any absorption of mind, any passion exist for me but that you know of, — which fills not only my heart, but my whole brain.

"Adieu, dear star, forever blessed. There may come a time when I can tell you the thoughts that now oppress me. To-night I can only say that I love you too well for my peace of mind, and that absence from you is death to me. . . . There are moments when I see clearly the least little objects that surround you; I look at that cushion with a pattern of black lace worked upon it on which you leaned, — I count the stitches. Never was my memory so fresh. My inward sight, on which are mirrored the houses I build, the landscapes I create, is now all given to the service of the most completely happy memory of my life. You cannot imagine the treasures of revery which glorify certain hours — some there are which fill my eyes with tears."

“PASSY, Feb. 6, 1844.

“. . . I beg you not to be troubled about adverse reviews of me; it might be more injurious the other

way. In France a man is doomed if he gets a name, and is crowned while living. Insults, calumnies, rejection, will do me no harm. Some day it will be known that though I lived by my pen not a penny has ever entered my purse that was not laboriously and hardly earned; that praise or blame are alike indifferent to me; that I have done my work amid cries of hatred, literary fusillades, and have held my course with a firm hand, imper- turbably. . . . Dear star of the first magnitude, I see, with regret, that you commit the mistake of defending me. When any one says harm of me in your presence there is but one thing for you to do, — laugh in your sleeve at those who calumniate me by outdoing what they say. Tell them, ‘If he escapes public indignation it is only because he is so clever in evading the law.’ That is what Dumas did; when some one said to him that his father was a negro, he replied, ‘My grand- father was a monkey.’ . . .

“You say in your last letter: What a volume that is which contains *La Maison Nucingen*, *Pierre Grassou*, and *Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan*. Perhaps you are right; I am proud of it (between our- selves). Next comes *Les Petits Bourgeois*, and after that *Les Frères de la Consolation*.¹ Nothing will then be wanting to my Parisian scenes but the artists, the theatre, and the *savants*. Those done, I shall have painted the great modern monster under all its aspects.

“Here, then, are the stakes I play for: during the present half-century four men will have had a vast in-

¹ *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine*. The American edition keeps the original name.

fluence on the world, — Napoleon, Cuvier, O'Connell; and I desire to be the fourth. The first lived on the blood of Europe, he was inoculated with war; the second espoused the whole globe; the third incarnated in himself a people; and I shall have carried a whole society in my brain. Better live thus than sit every night calling out, 'spades, trumps, hearts,' or troubling one's self as to why Madame Such-a-one does thus and so. But there will always be something in me that is greater than the writer, and far happier than he, — namely, your serf. My feeling, in itself, is to me nobler, grander, more complete than all the gratifications of vanity or fame."

"Feb. 6, 1844.

"Yesterday I consulted Dr. Roux (Dupuytren's successor), and he advises me to make a journey on foot as the only means of putting an end to the disposition my brain shows to become inflamed. When I don't suffer in the head I suffer in the intestines, and I have always a little fever. But just now as I write to you I feel well, or rather I feel better. . . .

"Ah, one more look at that dear room in Petersburg, and a deep sigh, alas, that I am not there! Why should n't you have a poet as others have a dog, a parrot, a monkey? — all the more because I have something of all three of them in me. I tell you again and again, *I am faithful* (here the countess throws up her head and casts a superb glance).

"Adieu, till to-morrow. The last two days I have recovered a little gayety. Can it be that something fortunate is happening to you?"

"Feb. 19, 1844.

" . . . Yes, you have every reason to be proud of your child. It is through seeing the young girls of her sphere and those who are the best brought-up here that I say to you, and repeat it, that you are right in being proud of your Anna. Tell her that I love her, for you whose happiness and pride she is, and for her own angelic soul which I appreciate. . . . Do you know what is the most lasting thing in sentiment? It is *la sorcellerie à froid*, — charm that can be deliberately judged. Well, the charm in you has undergone the coolest examination, and the most minute, as well as the most extended comparison, and all is in your favor. You, dear fraternal soul, you are the saintly and noble and devoted being to whom a man confides his whole life and happiness with ample security. You are the pharos, the light-giving star, the *sicura ricchezza, senza brama*. I have understood you, even to your sadness, which I love. Among all the reasons which I find to love you — and to love you with that flame of youth which brought me the only happy moment of my past life — there is not one against my loving, respecting, admiring you. In your presence no mental satiety is possible: in that I say to you a great thing — I say the thing that makes happiness. You will learn henceforth, from day to day, from year to year, the profound truth of what I am now writing to you. Whence comes it? I know not; perhaps from the similarity of characters, or that of minds, but above all from that admirable phenomenon called intimate comprehension, and also from the circumstances of our lives. We have both been deeply tried and

tortured in the course of our existence; each has a thirst for rest, — rest in our hearts and in our outward lives. We have the same worship of the ideal, the same faith, the same devotion. Well, if those elements cannot produce happiness, as their contraries produce unhappiness, we must deny that saltpetre, coal, and such things, produce ashes. But over and above these reasons it must be said, dear, that there is another, — a fact, a certainty; it is the inspiration of feeling, the inexplicable, intangible, invisible flame which God has given to certain of his creatures, and which enfolds them; for I love you as we love that which is beyond our reach; I love you as we love God, as we love happiness.”

“ Feb. 28, 1844.

“In spite of what you tell me of your plans for Dresden, I hardly believe in them. If you leave Petersburg the middle of May you cannot reach Wierzschovnia before the end of June; how then can you expect to be in Dresden in October? Will four months suffice to take possession of your rights, examine the accounts of the administration and the guardianship, and re-establish the *statum quo* of your personal government? No, I know you cannot leave in October; and I know, too, your anxious tenderness for your child will never suffer her to travel in winter. Do you comprehend what there is of despair to me in these convictions? Life was only supportable in the hope of Dresden; it will overwhelm me, annihilate me, if I have to wait longer. . . .

“ I went this morning for the proofs of what I have written of *Les Petits Bourgeois*. The printing-office

is close to Saint-Germain-des-Près; the idea came to me to enter the church, and I prayed for you and your dear child before the altar of the Virgin. Tears came into my eyes as I asked God to keep you both in life and health. Perhaps, in returning from those heights I have brought back some gleams from the ideal throne before which we kneel. With what fervor, what ardor, what abandonment of myself, do I feel that I am bound to you forever, — for time and for eternity, as pious people say.

“I inclose the first flower that has bloomed in my garden; it smiled to me this morning, and I send it charged with all those thoughts and emotions which cannot be written. . . . No, never in my living life have I said one word of you, nor of my worship, nor of my faith; and probably the stone which will some day lie above my body will keep the secret that I have kept in life. Therefore, there was never in this world a fresher and more immaculate feeling in any soul than that you know of.”

“PASSY, Oct. 11, 1844.

“To clear off some twenty thousand francs of debt and to start for Dresden in December with *Les Paysans* finished, — that is my dream; and if not realized how can I live through 1845?

“The death of your cousin Thaddeus grieves me. You have told me so much of him that you made me love him whom you loved. You have doubtless guessed why I called Paz Thaddeus, and gave him the character and sentiments of your poor cousin. While you weep for his loss remind yourself that I will love you for all those whose love you lose. . . .

“Are you really satisfied with the young man?¹ Examine him without predilections; for such excellent prospects for your child will certainly tend to make the suitor himself seem perfect. Remember that her whole life is involved. I am glad the first points, those of taste and sympathy, so necessary for her happiness and yours, are satisfactory; but, nevertheless, study him; be as stern in judgment as if you did not like him. The things to be considered above all else are principles, character, firmness. But how stupid of me to be giving this advice to the best and most devoted of mothers. I am sure I don't know why I am recommending prudence to one who possesses all the wits of all the Rzewuski, and who has an eye at the tip of each dainty little finger.

“C—— came to see me yesterday. He is a terrible dullard. I am alarmed to think that the king takes him with him five times out of ten wherever he goes. Louis-Philippe commits the same fault that Napoleon committed. He wants to be *all* and *sole*. There comes a day when empires perish because the man they rest on perishes, having neglected to provide his substitute. One thing is certain, the peace and tranquillity of Europe hang on a thread, and that thread is the life of an old man of seventy-six.”

“PASSY, Oct. 21, 1844.

“I am perfectly well again, and have gone back to work. This is a piece of good news I ought to write to you at once. But oh! dearest, a year is a year, don't you see? The heart cannot deceive itself; it must

¹ Comte Georges Mnischeck, as suitor to her daughter.

suffer its own pains in spite of the false remedies of hope — Hope! is it anything more than pain disguised? . . .

“I went out yesterday for the first time; and I bought a clock of regal magnificence, and two vases of sea-green marble, which are not less magnificent. A rich amateur is covetous of my Florentine furniture, and is coming to see it. I shall ask forty thousand francs. Another bit of news: Girardon’s ‘Christ,’ for which I paid two hundred francs, is valued at five thousand, and at twenty thousand with the Brustolone frame. I have also found a splendid pedestal for that bust by David, which they tell me is a great success. This beautiful thing only cost me three hundred francs, and the late Alibert, for whom it was made, must have paid fifteen or twenty thousand for it. And yet you laugh, dear countess, at my dealings in the kingdom of Bric-à-brac. Dr. Nacquart is very much opposed to my selling the furniture. He says: ‘In a few months you will be out of your present difficulties, and these magnificent things will be your glory.’ ‘I like money better,’ I replied. So you see, Harpagon was the poet, and the poet was Harpagon. Dear, believe me, I cannot suffer much longer as I am. Think of it! another delay! When *Les Paysans* is quite finished, I shall claim a word from you, permitting me to join you in your steppes.”

“November, 1844.

“As for your suggested plan, I would rather renounce tranquillity than obtain it at that price. When a man has troubled his country and intrigued in court and city, like Cardinal de Retz, he may evade his debts at Com-

mercy if he chooses; but in our commonplace epoch a man cannot leave his own place without paying all he owes; otherwise he would seem to be escaping his creditors. In these days we are doubtless less grand, less dazzling, but we are certainly more orderly, perhaps more honorable, than the great lords of the great century. This comes, possibly, from our altered understanding of what honor and duty mean; we have placed their meaning elsewhere, and the reason is simple enough. Those great men were the actors on a great stage, whose business it was to be admired, and they were paid for being so. *We* are now the paying public, which acts only for itself and by itself. Therefore, don't talk to me of Switzerland or Italy, or anything of that kind. My best, my only country lies within the fortifications of Paris. If I leave it it will only be to see you, — as you well know. I should already have done so had you permitted it.

“I have received a letter from Lirette, asking me to be present at the ceremony of her taking the vows and veil.”¹

“December 3.

“I got up at half-past two this morning, worked till midday, ate a hasty breakfast, and reached the convent at one o'clock. These good nuns really think the world turns for them alone. I asked the portress how long the ceremony would last, and she replied, ‘An hour.’ So I thought to myself: I can see Lirette after it, and get back in time for my business at the printing-

¹ Mlle. Lirette Borel, a confidential friend or companion of Mme. Hanska, had come to Paris to enter, with Balzac's assistance, the Order of Saint-Thomas-de-Villeneuve.

office. Well, it lasted till four o'clock! then I had to see the poor girl afterwards; I did not get away till half-past five. However, it was right that my dear countess and Anna should be represented at the burial of their friend; so I went through with it bravely. I had a fine place beside the officiating priest. The sermon lasted nearly an hour; it was well written and well delivered, — not strong, but full of faith. The officiating priest went to sleep (he was an old man). Lirette never stirred. She was on her knees between two postulants. The little girls were ranged on one side of the choir; the chapter was on the other, behind the grating which was made transparent for the ceremony. Lirette, together with the postulants, heard the sermon on her knees, and did not raise her eyes. Her face was white, pure, and stamped with the enthusiasm of a saint. As I had never seen the ceremony of taking the veil, I watched, observed, and studied everything with a deep attention which made them take me, I have no doubt, for a very pious man. On arriving I prayed for you and for your children fervently; for each time that I see an altar I take my flight to God and humbly dare, and ardently, to ask his goodness for me and mine, — who are you and yours. The chapel, with its white and gold altar, was a very pretty one. The ceremony was imposing and very dramatic. I felt deeply moved when the three new sisters threw themselves on the ground and were buried under a pall, while prayers for the dead were recited over those three living creatures, and when, after that, they rose and appeared as brides crowned with white roses, to make their vows of espousal to Jesus Christ.

“Just then an incident occurred. The youngest of the sisters — pretty as a dream of love — was so agitated that when it came to pronouncing the vows she was obliged to stop short just at the vow of chastity. It lasted thirty seconds at most; but it was awful; there seemed to be uncertainty. For my part, I admit that I was shaken to the depths of my soul; the emotion I felt was too great for an unknown cause. The poor little thing soon came to herself, and the ceremony went on without further hindrance. . . .

“I saw Lirette after the ceremony; she was gay as a bird; she said she was so happy that she prayed continually that God would make us all monks and nuns. We ended by talking seriously of you and your dear child.

“To-morrow I am going to see a little house which is for sale near the church of Saint Vincent-de-Paul; the Byzantine church which we went to see, you remember, and where a funeral was going on. You said to me, looking at the vacant ground near the church, ‘I should not be unwilling to live here; we should be near to God, and far from the world.’”

“PASSY, Feb. 15, 1845.

“Poor dear countess, how many things I have to say to you. Without your inexorable order, I should have been in Dresden a month ago. . . . All these uncertainties have weighed heavily upon me; for how can I work when every hour I expect a letter to tell me to start at once? I have not yet written one line for the end of *Les Paysans*. This uncertainty has completely disorganized me. From the mere point of view of

material interests it is fatal. In spite of your fine intelligence you are unable to understand this, for you know nothing of Parisian economy or the painful straits of a man who tries to live on six thousand francs a year. But the worst of all is the impossibility of occupying my mind. How can I throw myself into absorbing labor with the idea before me of soon starting — and starting to see you? It is impossible. To do so I need to have no heart. I have been tortured and agitated as I never was in my life before. It is a triple martyrdom of the heart, of the head, of the interests, and (my imagination aiding) it has been so violent that I declare to you I am half dazed, so dazed that to escape madness I have taken to going out in the evening and playing lansquenet at Madame Merlin's and other places. I had to apply a remedy to such disease. I have been to the opera, and dined out twice, and tried to lead a gay life for the last fortnight. And now I *will* work night and day and finish *Les Paysans*. It will take a month of herculean labor, but I inscribe upon my brain (to be rejected by my heart) the words: 'Think no more of your star, nor of Dresden, nor of travel; stay in your chains and toil miserably.'

" April 5, 1845.

"I do not know what to think of what you say of my letter. I, to give you pain or the faintest grief! I, whose constant thought it is to spare you pain! Good God! however right my intentions were, it seems that I have hurt you, and that is enough. . . . When I see you I will explain all. . . . Under such irritating circumstances I was impatient. I write my letters hastily and never read them over. I say what is in my mind

without reflection. If I had reread that letter perhaps I should have sacrificed it to Vulcan, as I often do others in which *my voice gets too loud.*"

"April 18.

"You write, 'I wish I could see you.' Well, when you hold this letter in your dainty fingers, may they tremble a little, for I shall be very near you, at Eisenach, at Erfurt, — I can't now tell where, for I shall follow my letter. To-day is Friday, and I start Sunday."

"Sept. 10, 1845.

"My faculties have come back to me more brilliant than ever. I am certain that the present two books will be worthy of the former ones. I tell you this to calm the anxiety of your fraternal soul as to the reaction of the physical upon the mental faculties, and to prove to you for the millionth time that I tell you the exact truth and hide nothing, either good or bad. Go to the baths of Teplitz, or elsewhere, if necessary, only be faithful to your promise at Sarmate. . . . I have no words but the mute language of the heart to thank you for that adorable letter, in which your gayety breaks forth with sparkling gush, — sweet treasure of your dear mind, which the charming weather has brought back to you. I remember your once saying to me: 'It is only wrong-doers who can stay sad when the joyous sun is shining.'

"I am working, working, — God knows how, and God knows why. When you hold this letter in your hand I shall probably have no debts, except to my family. We will talk these things over on the boat

from Chalons. There is much to tell, and I hope that this time you will not be dissatisfied with your servant. I have an enormous amount of work to do in thinking, writing, and correcting, so as to be free to accompany you. When this letter reaches you, think that we are each going towards the other. Take care of yourself; see to your health; your child's welfare depends on it. I dare not say mine, and yet, what else have I in this world?"

"PASSY, January 1, 1846.

"Another year, dear, and I enter it with pleasure. Thirteen years in February since the happy day when I received your first letter. They seem to me links, indestructible, eternal, glittering with happiness and life. The fourteenth year will soon begin. . . . You are my happiness, as you are my fame and my future. Do you remember that early morning at Valence on the bank of the Rhone, when our gentle talk made you forget your neuralgia? when we walked for two hours in the dawn, both ill, yet without noticing the cold or our own sufferings? Believe me, such memories, which are wholly of the soul, are as powerful as the material recollections of others; for in you, soul is more beautiful than the corporeal beauties for which the sons of Adam destroy themselves."

"February 14, 1846.

"You do not yet know that I am silently collecting superb things in art furniture, — thanks to researches, tramps about Paris, economies and privations. I don't mean to speak of this, however; I shall not unmask my batteries until my dream gathers more and more the semblance of reality. . . . Yesterday I found two

Sèvres vases (of the Restoration) which were, no doubt, painted for some entomologist, for they are covered with the loveliest insects; evidently the work of an artist, and of great value, — a real discovery, a rare chance, such as I have never before met with. With time and patience one can find everything in Paris, even bargains. Just now I am in treaty for a chandelier which must have belonged to some emperor of Germany, for it is topped by a double-headed eagle. It is Flemish, and certainly came from Brussels before the Revolution; weighs two hundred pounds, and is all brass. I expect to get it for its intrinsic value, 450 francs. I want it for my dining-room, which will be in the same style. I see your alarm at this news; but don't be uneasy, I am not making debts; I obey your supreme commands. . . . I saw the other day in a bric-à-brac shop a miniature of Madame de Sévigné, done, I thought, in her lifetime. It can be had for very little; do you want it? It struck me as rather good, but I had no time to examine it properly."

"16th.

"I have seen that miniature again and it is hideous. But on the other hand I have bought a portrait of Maria Leczinska after Coypel, evidently painted in his atelier. I got it for the value of the frame. It is one of those portraits of queens such as they give to cities or great personages, and will do very well to decorate the salon. Gautier is to bring me a painter named Chenavard to pass judgment on it, for, like Louis XIV., 'I don't choose to deceive myself.'"

“PASSY, June 14, 1846.

“My financial situation is better than I thought. My principal creditors are perfectly satisfied with the liberal manner in which I have settled their accounts. I can easily pay all. My health is excellent, and as for talent — oh! I have recovered it in all its early bloom. My arrangements with publishers will be concluded this week. Write me the exact time when you will permit me to go to you, so that I may be quite ready. Here is what I am going to work at now: *L'Histoire des Parents Pauvres*, *Le Bonhomme Pons*, and *La Cousine Bette*; also *Les Méfaits d'un Procureur du roi*, and the last of *Les Paysans*. This will bring me in more than my payments. . . . The publishing business is just now in a bad way. I am to see Furne, Véron, and Charpentier this morning.

“I am going valiantly to work with much ardor. Already I have spent two long nights on *Le Bonhomme Pons*. I think it will be a really fine work, remarkable even among those I am best satisfied with. You shall see! I have dedicated it to our dear Teano, and I want it to be worthy of him. The story belongs to the order of *César Birotteau* and the *Interdiction*. The point is to interest the reader in a poor and simple-minded man, an old man, crushed by humiliations and insults, full of feeling, forgiving all and revenging himself only by benefits. *La Cousine Bette* is also a poor relation, crushed by humiliations and insults, living in the midst of three or four families, and meditating vengeance for her bruised pride and wounded vanity. These two histories, with that of *Pierrette*, will make the series of *Les Parents Pauvres*.”

“ July 14, 1846.

“ Two years of peace and tranquillity are absolutely necessary to soothe my soul after sixteen years of successive catastrophes. I feel, I do assure you, very weary of these incessant struggles. If it were not for the new motives for courage which have entered my heart I should, like that drowning man whose strength kept him up for hours in a furious sea, succumb at last to the gentler waves within sight of port. To be dragged incessantly away from all calmness and from the work of the mind by annoyances and anxieties which would drive ordinary people mad, is that living, I ask you?

“ I have *not* lived in these latter years, except at Dresden, Baden, Rome, or when we journeyed together. Thanks be to you, oh, dear and tender consoling angel, who alone have poured into my desolate life some drops of pure happiness, that marvellous oil which does at times give courage and vigor to the fainting wrestler. That alone should open to you the gates of paradise, if indeed you have any faults to reproach yourself with, — you, perfect woman, devoted mother, kind and compassionate friend. It is a great and noble mission to console those who have found no consolation on this earth. I have in the treasure of your letters, in the still greater treasure of my recollections, in the grateful and constant thought of the good you have done to my soul by your advice and your example, a sovereign remedy against all misfortunes; and I bless you very often, my dear and beneficent star, in the silence of night and in the worst of my troubles. May that blessing, which looks to God as the author of all

good, reach you often. Try to hear it in the murmuring sounds which are heard in the soul though we know not whence they come. My God! without you, where should I be?" . . .

"July 20, 1846.

"You tell me of complications in your affairs. But, as you say, we must trust in Providence, for all things are in danger if we sound the earth about us. . . . I must tell you, however, that nothing surprises me more than to see you so troubled over things you cannot change, — you, whom I have seen so submissive to the Divine will; you, who have always walked straight before you, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and still less behind you, where the past is engulfed as one dead. Why not let yourself be led by the hand of God through the world and through life as you have been hitherto; and so advance into the future with that calmness, serenity, and confidence which a faith like yours ought to inspire? I must admit that in seeing my star, which shines with so pure a ray, thus disturbed about material interests, there is something, I know not what, which I do not like, and which makes me suffer. You have already given too much of your time and your beautiful youth to such cares, in spite of your instincts and your natural aversions; but you were then compelled to do so by necessity, by the interests of your beloved child, and by your sense of duty. Now that you have fulfilled with such scrupulous and meritorious thoroughness your obligations to your admirable daughter, who understands so well what she owes to you, and whom you have now established according to the choice of her heart and also in accordance with

your own ideas and sympathies, you surely have nothing more to do than to seek the rest and quietude you so fully deserve, and give up the burden of business affairs to your children, who will continue the work of your patient and laborious administration. What can you fear for them, so intelligent, so enlightened, so reasonable, so perfectly united, so fitted for one another? Why foresee events which might trouble such security? Why fear catastrophes which, I delight in thinking, can never happen? By spending your strength on imaginary dangers you will have none left for real ones — if they ever threaten you, which I doubt.”

“July 29, 1846.

“I have just found a letter from your children in the post-office, to which Anna has added these few words, which make me uneasy. She says: ‘Mamma is sad and suffering. You ought to come here and help us to distract her mind.’ I went at once and took my place as far as Mayence. I shall go through as punctually as possible; you cannot doubt it. Adieu.”

He joined them soon after at Wiesbaden and made the little trip to Strasburg which has already been mentioned. During this and the following year (1846, 1847) he did no other work than to finish certain books already in course of publication, and write the first third of *Le Député d’Arcis*, which was finished by M. Charles Rabou and published three years after Balzac’s death.

In October, 1847, he made his first visit to Madame Hanska’s home in the Ukraine, of which he gives the following description to his sister, Madame Surville.

“WIERZSCHOVNIA, Oct. 8, 1847.

“MY DEAR SISTER, — I arrived here without other accident than extreme fatigue ; for I have come over a quarter of the earth’s diameter and even more in eight days, without stopping or going to bed. If I had doubled the distance I should have found myself beyond the Himalayas. As I got here ten days before my letter, I greatly surprised my friends, who were much touched by my eagerness.

“This habitation is an actual Louvre, and the territory belonging to it greater than that of one of our departments. In France we have no conception of the extent and fertility of these great estates, where no manure is ever used, and where they sow wheat year after year. Though the young count and countess have something like twenty thousand male peasants (forty thousand souls) to their share alone, it would require four hundred thousand to keep all the land in cultivation. They only sow as much as they are able to reap and gather in. . . .

“The country is peculiar in the sense that side by side with the utmost magnificence the commonest comforts are lacking. This estate is the only one in the province which possesses a Carcel lamp and a hospital. There are mirrors ten feet high, and bare walls ; yet Wierzschovnia is held to be the most sumptuous dwelling in the Ukraine, which is the size of France. Delightful tranquillity reigns. The authorities have been full of attentions, I might say chivalric attentions for me ; otherwise without such miraculous help, I could never have got here ; being ignorant of the languages of the regions through which I passed. From the European frontier to Odessa the country is a flat plain, like our

Beance. My arrival has been sadly celebrated by two terrible conflagrations, which burned several houses. I saw the dreadful sight. . . .

“In spite of these fertile lands the commutation of crops into money is extremely difficult, for the bailiffs steal, and labor is scarce to thresh the wheat, which is done by machines. Nevertheless, few persons in France have any idea of the wealth and power of Russia. It must be seen to be believed. This power and wealth are all territorial, which will, sooner or later, make Russia the mistress of European markets for all natural products. . . .

“I have taken a heavy cold, which will probably last me two months; it is so bad I cannot leave the house. I ought to go to Kiev, the Rome of the North, a city with three hundred churches, to pay my respects to the Governor, who is viceroy of three great principalities of the size of an empire, and obtain my permit to remain here. It is physically impossible that I should return to Paris for six or eight months. The winter is beginning, and I could not risk a journey at that season. I shall probably be in Paris towards April; but even so, I shall return here immediately, as we wish to make a journey to the Crimea and the Caucasus and go as far as Tiflis. The idea of such a journey delights me. There is nothing finer than that region. They say it is like Switzerland *plus* the sea and the vegetation of the tropics.”

“November, 1847.

“You cannot imagine the enormous wealth which accumulates in Russia and is wasted for want of means of transportation. Here (and Wierzschovnia is a palace)

they heat the stoves with straw, and burn more in one week than there is in the Saint-Laurent market in Paris. I went the other day to the *foliwork* of Wierzschovnia, which is the place where they stack the wheat and thresh it; for this village alone there were twenty stacks, each thirty feet high by one hundred and twenty five feet long and thirty feet broad. But the thefts of the bailiffs and the heavy expenses diminish the revenues greatly. We have no idea in France of existence here. At Wierzschovnia, for instance, it is necessary to have all trades on the place. There is a tailor, a shoemaker, a confectioner, an upholsterer, etc., attached to the house. I understand now what the late Monsieur H. (who had a whole orchestra in his service) said to me at Geneva about his three hundred servants.

“ My great hope and desire is not, as yet, near to its accomplishment. Madame Hanska is indispensable to her children. She guides and instructs them in the vast and difficult administration of the property. She has given all to her daughter. I knew of this intention when I was with her in Petersburg; and I am delighted that the happiness of my life is detached from all self-interests; it makes me the more solicitous to guard that which has been confided to me. . . . I have seen Kiev, the orthodox city of three hundred churches, and the riches of Lavza, the Saint Sophia of the steppes. It was well to see it once. I was showered with attentions. Would you believe it, a rich moujik has read all my books and burns a taper for me weekly before Saint Nicholas! He gave money to the servants of Madame Hanska's sister to let him know when I came to Kiev, so that he might see me.

“I have a delightful suite of rooms,—a salon, study, and bed-chamber. The study is in rose-colored stucco, with a fireplace, superb carpets, and commodious furniture. The windows are one sheet of glass, so that I can look round the landscape on all sides. You can imagine that Wierzschovnia is indeed a Louvre when I tell you it contains five or six other such suites of rooms for guests. As I am working hard just now, I breakfast in my own rooms and only go down to dinner; but the ladies and Comte Georges pay me little visits. It is a patriarchal life without the slightest enni.

“Your letters gave me great pleasure. I am delighted to know from my mother that the little house in the rue Fortunée is carefully guarded. Madame Hanska has been very anxious about it on account of the valuables it contains. They are the product of six years’ economy, and she is afraid of thieves or accident. It is indeed a nest, built straw by straw.”

Balzac returned to Paris on the eve of the Revolution of February, 1848. It was at this time that he met the *gens-de-lettres* at the Institute, in response to Ledru-Rollin’s invitation, of which Champfleury gives the amusing account already quoted. This young writer had lately dedicated a book (“*Fen Miette*”) to Balzac, who in return invited him to the rue Fortunée. The account which Champfleury gives of the sumptuous little “nest,” destined to see a month’s fruition of the hope of years, is valuable as being one of the most personal pictures which we have of its master, and the only one which shows him to us in his last years:—

“On the 27th of February, 1848, three days after the departure of Louis Philippe, Monsieur de Balzac wrote to ask me to go and see him in the rue Fortunée. His household appeared to consist of a valet and a concierge. M. de Balzac came downstairs to meet me, wrapped in the well-known white dress of a monk. His face was round, his black eyes excessively brilliant; the general aspect of his skin olive, with strong red tones on the cheeks, and pure yellow ones about the temples, near the eyes; his thick hair was very black, but threaded with silver,—a powerful mane. In spite of the ample robe, I noticed that his stomach was enormous. Monsieur de Balzac was handsome. Unlike most persons who are unable to find the man of their thoughts when they first meet a genius, I was surprised by his *beauty*. . . . It was not, of course, that Greek beauty which has turned the bald heads of France and Germany; it was the beauty belonging to his intellect, which was not shut in within himself (as in many men), but expanded itself on his face. The face of the author of the *Comédie Humaine* showed strength, courage, patience, and genius. His eyes questioned and listened like those of a priest and a physician. I have never seen any like them for fullness of idea and depth. His joyous face inspired joy, just as an actor who yawns can make his audience yawn. All known portraits of Balzac are insufficient to represent him.

“After two hours’ conversation I rose to go. M. de Balzac took me down a broad staircase different from the one by which we went up. I noticed, in passing, a marble statue of himself, three-quarter size, which

seemed to me second-rate. ‘Ah! do you care for art?’ he said to me. ‘Then I must show you my collection.’ We went up through other rooms until we entered a long gallery, in which the chief picture was a large Domenichino. There were many other pictures, but I have forgotten their subjects and the names of their painters.

‘As we walked along, I wondered a little that I seemed to know the place. M. de Balzac explained the various objects. He told me, among other things, the genealogy of the frames. One of them had belonged to Marie de Médicis, and M. de Rothschild was anxious to possess it. I was turning over in my mind how it could be that I knew this gallery without ever having entered it, when, as we passed into another room, M. de Balzac stopped me before a little carved wooden frame, empty, yet hung intentionally in a strong light. ‘When the famous — [Dutch antiquary whose name I have forgotten] heard I had a frame by this master,’ said M. de Balzac, ‘he would have given the last drop of his blood to get half of it.’ Then the truth flashed upon me. I was in the gallery of Cousin Pons. Here were Cousin Pons’ pictures, Cousin Pons’ curios. I knew them now.

‘After the picture gallery we entered a room lighted by a single window. The door once closed, nothing could be seen but cases filled with books in good bindings. It would have been difficult to get out of the room without a guide. . . . M. de Balzac then showed me, with the enthusiasm of a proprietor, the arrangements of the house, the convenience of the rooms, the bathroom, the boudoir of the late banker Beaujon, the

frescos of which had just been restored ; and, finally, a large salon, full of all sorts of curiosities, carved furniture, comfortable arm-chairs just repolished and carefully regilded. I spent three hours in this way, — three rapid hours, — during which M. de Balzac seemed to me the man I had pictured him, — the simple and sincere artist, full of a certain pride which charmed me, showing deep respect for the hand of man in art, and loving literature as the Arab loves the wild horse of the desert which he has mastered.”

Balzac returned to Wierschovnia in October, 1848, and did not leave it again till April, 1850. His letters to his sister during this period show the two-fold struggle that he went through ; first, with the fatal malady that was already upon him (without his knowledge), and next in the unavailing effort to bring Madame Hanska to take the step of marriage. The letters are unutterably sad ; not so much for what they say as for what the reader, with his clearer knowledge of all that was about to happen, sees in them. In the present day we know more of disease and its causes than the laity, or even many of the physicians, of the first half of this century. It is plain to all who read this history now that Balzac was in the grasp of a mortal malady as early as 1847, before he went to that cruel Russian climate, which gave him his *coup-de-grâce*. After he was taken ill at Wierschovnia, he trusted, with his natural confidence, to a local doctor, who tortured him with remedies to no purpose, against the advice of his own son, a physician of broader intelligence. Dr. Nacquart, his lifelong friend and physician, being asked to give the causes of Balzac's death, wrote a long and

rather irrelevant statement, in which, however, the following significant facts appear: "A long-standing disease of the heart, aggravated by over-work at night, and the use, or abuse, of coffee had taken a new and fatal development. . . . His breathing was short and panting, and forbade all active motion; his voice, formerly so strong, was weak and broken; his eyes, once clear and far-sighted, were covered with a film or veil. The patient retained hopes of himself; but science had in the first instance diagnosed the complication of a marked albuminaria (*profonde albuminarie*), and could see no prospect of recovery." Balzac himself seems never to have lost heart; and this was fortunate indeed; for his ignorance as to his true state gave him his heart's desire in his marriage; which appears (we are thankful to feel) to have been as deep a happiness to his wife as it was to him.

The following letters and extracts of letters will tell briefly the story of the last two years:—

"WIERZSCHOVNIA, November, 1848.

"YOUNG LADIES AND VERY HONORED NIECES:¹

"I am highly pleased with your letters, which gave me great satisfaction, and which any other uncle than one *known for his agreeable writings* would regard with blackest envy on account of their graceful liveliness, and the perfection of their style. Therefore have they won for each of you, as due recompense for such fine talents, a "caraco" made of magnificent termolama, trimmed with handsome fur; which your august uncle will endeavor to smuggle through the

¹ Mesdemoiselles Sophie and Valentine Surville.

custom-house, and which will make you objects of envy to all your companions in the drawing-class. You can never wear out your termolamas, because that thick, handsome silken stuff will last ten or fifteen years. The young countess has a fur-lined garment made of termolama, which her mother wore in 1830, and which still retains its colors. I don't know how the Orientals manage to put the sun into their stuffs. Those Eastern peoples are drunk with light.

“Do me the favor to send me the following receipts, clearly and carefully written out, so that they can be taught to moujik cooks: (1) the tomato sauce invented by your mother, exactly as it is served at your table; (2) the onion purée which Louise used to make at your grandmother's. For here, I must tell you, we live in the midst of a great desert, and in order to swallow a bit of beef or mutton (which is not *Pré-Salé*), one needs the resources and persuasions of Parisian cookery. Be proud of thus becoming the benefactresses of a land entirely deprived of veal, — I mean eatable veal; for the cows do have calves here as elsewhere, but those calves are republican in their leanness. Beef, such as you know it in Paris, is a myth; I remember it in my dreams. Excellent tea is a consolation, and the dairy products are delicious; but as for vegetables, they are dreadful. Carrots taste like radish, and turnips have no taste at all. On the other hand, they make porridge out of many things, millet, oats, buckwheat, barley, — I believe they make it out of the barks of trees. Therefore, my dear nieces, have pity on this region, so rich in corn, so poor in vegetables. How Valentine would laugh at the apples, pears, and plums. . . .

“Now, Sophie, you need not be uneasy about the music for the Comtesse Georges. She has the genius of music, as she has that of love. If she had not been born an heiress, she would certainly have become a great artist. Music, her mother, her husband, — there you have her character in three words. She is the fairy of the domestic hearth, the sparkle of our souls, our gaiety, the life of the house. When she is not in it the very walls miss her, for she brightens them with her presence. . . . She is thoroughly educated, without pedantry; her naïveté is delicious; although she has been married two years, she is as merry as a child, and full of laughter as a young girl, — which does not prevent her from feeling a religious enthusiasm for noble things. Physically, she possesses grace, which is sometimes more beautiful than beauty, and this triumphs over a complexion which is rather dark; her nose is well-cut, but pretty only in profile; her figure is perfect, supple, elegant; her feet and hands delicate and wonderfully small. All these advantages are brought into relief by an air of distinction, of race, that indefinable air of easy grandeur which all queens do not possess, and which is now lost to us in France, where every one expects to be the equal of others. She speaks four languages as well as if she were born in the countries where they are spoken. She is keenly observing; nothing escapes her; I am often surprised by this myself; but with it all she is extremely discreet. After living in the house with her some weeks I could think of no word to describe her to my own mind but ‘pearl.’ Her husband adores her.

“I wish I could think that Valentine would study as

much as the Comtesse Georges, who, besides all her other studies, gives much time every day to the piano. The thing that has given her this splendid education is *work*. Now I must tell my dear little niece that to do nothing but what we like to do is the origin of all degradation, especially for a woman. Rules to obey, duties to be done, have been the law of this young girl's life, although she was an only daughter and a rich heiress. Even to this day, she is a little child in presence of her mother; she disputes with others the honor of waiting on her; she has an English, I may say, feudal reverence for her; she knows how to combine deep love and deep respect, tenderness with familiarity, without infringing on the enormous distance between her mother and herself. The young countess has never said 'thou' to her mother, and yet the problem of infinite tenderness and infinite respect is perfectly solved.

“ Don't think this a lesson, my dear nieces. I know your affection for your parents, who have made your childhood and youth a poem, such as your mother and I never had in our day, and which your excellent mother vowed you should some day enjoy. In France we are not born, as these people are here, to see a whole population prostrate before social grandeur; we have no longer the right to think any one beneath us; we are each obliged now to acquire our own value personally. This will make a great people of us, — provided we do not let commonplace and vulgar vanities get the better of us. So I entreat Valentine to set tasks to herself, to find work to be done, if only to get the habit of duty, — of course without neglecting the ordinary

and daily employments of the household; and above all, to repress the desire to *do only what one likes*, for that is a descent into all misfortunes.

“But that’s enough morality, — for you are both such little pests that you are capable of thinking I make your ‘caracos’ bitter to you. God forbid that I should be like those parents who spread their children’s bread and butter with moral rhubarb.”

“February 9, 1849.

“You tell me, my dear sister, that you think of leaving your present house and finding a cheaper one elsewhere. You are right; for in crises like your present one it is well to cut down expenses to absolute necessities. I can cite my own case for that. I never spent more on myself in Paris (counting carriages and trips to Saché) than two hundred francs. I advise you to look about the neighborhood of Passy, les Ternes, or Chailiot; there you will find as good an apartment as your present one for less money. If I were Surville I should take a single room in a central part of Paris and keep my office there. In this way you will pull through the present crisis. You know what means I employed to live cheaply. My cooking was done twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays. I ate cold meat and salad the other days. By contenting myself at Passy with strict necessities, I managed to spend only a franc a head each day. I could do it again without blinking.”

“March 3, 1849.

“The winter has not spared us; the cold has been like that of 1812. I took a fourth cold at Kiev, which

has made me suffer long and cruelly. The treatment I have been undergoing for my heart and lung trouble was interrupted, for I had no strength for it. I have reached the stage of absolute muscular weakness in those two organs, which causes suffocation for no cause at all, — a slight noise, a word spoken loudly. However, this last cold is getting better, and they are going to try and remedy the muscular exhaustion; otherwise, the journey home would be very difficult. I have had to get a valet, — being unable to lift a package, or make any movement at all violent. . . .

“The conclusion of the great affair of my life meets with difficulties foreseen and caused by mere formalities; so that though we are both most anxious to reach the rue Fortunée, there is still great uncertainty.”

“March 22, 1849.

“At last I obtained permission to write to Petersburg for the consent of the sovereign ruler to our marriage. He refused it; and his minister writes that we know the laws and they must be obeyed. Weary of the struggle, Madame Hanska now talks of my returning to Paris, and selling everything in the rue Fortunée. Here, she is rich, beloved, respected; she spends nothing; and she hesitates to go where she sees only troubles, debts, expenses, and new faces. Her children tremble for her. You can see that in view of all these doubts expressed and felt about future happiness, an honorable man ought to depart, return the property in the rue Fortunée to whom it belongs, go back to his pen, and hide himself in some hole at Passy.

“I have, and I have always had in Madame Hanska the best and most devoted of friends, — a friend such as one finds but once in life. Her children love me as one of their own family, but they do not wish their adored mother to run the risks of an unfortunate future; and they are right. You cannot imagine the wisdom and good sense of Madame Hanska; they are equal to her educational knowledge, which is vast. She is still beautiful; but she has a dread of society and all its annoyances; she loves quiet, solitude, and study. . . .

“The only thing that I thirst for is tranquillity, domestic life, and moderate work in finishing the *Comédie Humaine*. If I fail in this completely, I shall take what belongs to me in the rue Fortunée and begin my life anew. But this time I will board in some establishment and live in one room, so as to be independent of everything, even furniture. Will you believe me when I tell you that the prospect does not alarm me — except for my mother. But even then, by spending only one hundred and fifty francs a month, I could still pay her income. If I lose all here I shall live no longer. I should be content with the garret in the rue Lesdiguières and one hundred francs a month. The heart, the mind, the ambition, can desire no other thing than that I have sought for sixteen years. If that immense happiness escapes me I have no need for anything — I could desire nothing. . . . You must not think that I care for luxury. I care for the luxury of the rue Fortunée with all its accompaniments, — a beautiful wife, well-born, a competence, and friends; but in itself it is nothing to me, — the rue Fortunée exists only *for* and *by* her.”

“ April 9, 1849.

“ Would you believe that my troubles have made me lose two sound teeth, white and uninjured, and that without pain? No one knows what the years 1847 and 1848 have cost me; above all in the uncertainty that overhangs my fate. Here I have material tranquillity, and that is all. . . . I wish I could see something reassuring about the future; but all is doubtful and tending to the worst side.”

“ April 30, 1849.

“ I am still here, detained by illness. Alas! I have paid tribute to 1848. I have come to such a pass that I can no longer brush my hair without suffocation and palpitation. Twice I nearly strangled from the impossibility of inhaling and exhaling my breath. I cannot go upstairs. . . . Happily there is a doctor here, a pupil of the famous Franck (the original of my *Médecin de Campagne*). He and his son say the trouble is a *simple hypertrophy* and answer for my complete cure. But here I am, in for a course of treatment for God knows how long. . . .

“ This horrible illness, horrible for a man of my vivacity (for is it living to have to avoid everything,— the least expression of feeling, a word too eagerly said, a step too rapid?), is complicated by the effects of the climate. Till now, I have not felt the baneful effects of the Asiatic climate. It is fearful. I have headaches all the time. Heat and cold are both excessive. Asia sends us winds charged with elements quite other than those of European atmospheres. But, as I tell you, the doctors answer for my recovery, and I could not be as

well cared for in Paris as I am here, where every one shows me such tender, fraternal, filial feelings and genuine attachment, like that of a loving family. We live as though we had but one heart among the four. This is, I know, reiteration ; but it is the only definition I can give of the life I live here. . . .

“ Cost what it may, I shall return to Paris in August. One should die in one’s form. How can I offer a life broken as mine is now? I shall do what my situation requires towards the incomparable friend who for sixteen years has shone upon my life like a blessed star.”

“ June 21, 1849.

“ The trouble in my heart (not to speak of those in my stomach which are a consequence of it) has increased to such a degree that the treatment is renewed. I have been auscultated, and the disease named (so as not to alarm me) *simple hypertrophy*. It appears that the father undertook the cure against the advice of the son, who, imbued with our French ideas, thought it was all over with me. . . . [Here follow many details of his illness and treatment.] However, the doctor is confident he can complete the work and make me as good as new. He is a great physician, quite unknown. He does justice to the French faculty ; says they are the first in the world for recognizing and diagnosing diseases ; but declares them absolutely ignorant, with a few exceptions, of therapeutics, — that is, the knowledge of means of cure. Is it not dreadful to think that Frédéric Soulié died for want of this doctor of mine? — for two months ago I was as ill as Soulié was when he put himself under treatment.”

“ August 5, 1849.

“ Affairs here, financially, are in a perilous state. Enormous crops, no money. I fear, for reasons not of a nature to put in a letter, that the purpose that brought me here is *indefinitely postponed*. Can you believe that it is impossible to send money out of this country? Not only does an imperial edict forbid it, but the Jews exact fifteen or twenty per cent commission. You can have no conception of the greed of the Jews here. Shylock was a joke to them, a born innocent. And remember this is only in the matter of exchange; when it comes to borrowing they sometimes require fifty per cent, even one Jew from another Jew.”

“ October 20, 1849.

“ I have had what the doctor calls an intermittent cephalalgic fever. It was horrible. It lasted thirty-four days. I am as thin as I was in 1819; though there is still a little flesh on my stomach, the last refuge of the fat which illness has taken from me. . . . The fever is over and done with, but it has interrupted the treatment of the chronic affection. . . .

“ Tell my mother that although I cannot return to Paris now, I have hopes of a happy termination of my journey here; you can safely say that. I had better stay here some months longer than go to Paris now and return. You may say that things are perhaps going better than I am willing to write. But manage so that she shall not suspect that I am ill.

“ I have a dressing-gown for my illness which forever puts an end to the white robes of the Chartreux. It is made of termolama, a Persian or Circassian stuff, all

silk, with those miracles of hand-work you see in India shawls. It lasts for years. You are clothed with the sun. It is warm and light. My termolama has a black ground, with palm leaves wreathed with delicate little flowers with gold reflections, — all hand-work ; something like Venetian brocade embroidered in silver and gold. My illness has made a baby of me. I am possessed by one of those delightful joys we only have at eighteen. I march about in the glory of my termolama like a sultan. I am writing to you now in my termolama.

“The Comtesse Anna and her husband have brought back from Wiezniowicz the alarm-clock of Marina Mniszeck, the czarina, whose wedding outfit, as appears from the archives of the family here, contained a bushel of pearls and *six chemises*. Their uncle was the last king of Poland, to whom Madame Geoffrin sold her pictures. The young count and countess have brought to Madame Hanska the loveliest Greuze I ever saw, “*La Jeune Fille effrayée*,” done by Greuze for Mme. Geoffrin ; and two Watteaus, also painted for Madame Geoffrin. These three pictures are worth 80,000 francs. There are also two admirable Leslies, “James II. and his first wife,” a fine Van Dyck, a Cranach, a Mignard, a Rigaud, a Netscher, and a portrait of James II. by Lely, all superb ; besides these, three Canaletti, bought by the king from the Rezzonicos, and three Rothari, finer than the Greuze. Rothari was a Venetian painter of the eighteenth century, almost unknown in France. The Empress Maria Teresa made him a count of the Russian empire. He is the Greuze of Italy. The Comtesse Georges wishes the three

Canaletti to be in my gallery, the two Watteaus, the Greuze, and the finest of the Rothari in the salon in marquetry, for which I now want only two flat vases in malachite, and two jars to make it complete. Oh, I forgot two Van Huysums, which if you covered them with diamonds would be scarcely paid for. What treasures these great Polish houses contain! and how the treasures rub shoulders with barbarism!

“Adieu; I chatter like a convalescent.”

“Nov. 29, 1849.

“I have had to go back to the treatment for heart-disease. My doctor is a great physician, buried at Wierzschovnia, who, like many another genius, dislikes the art in which he excels. . . . He has invented *powders*. . . . He keeps the composition of his powders so great a secret that he will not even reveal it to his son. He has radically cured persons much worse than I.

“I don't wonder you are proud of your girls. They write me charming letters. . . . Those girls are the compensation for your life. We must not be unjust to Fate, we can accept troubles for such joys. It is just so with me and Madame Hanska. The gift of her affection explains to me my sorrows, my misfortunes, my labors. I have paid in advance the price of this treasure. Napoleon said that everything is paid for here below, nothing is stolen. I even feel as if I had paid very little. What are twenty-five years of struggle and toil to win at last so splendid, so radiant, so complete a love. It is now fourteen months that I have been living here in a desert, — for it *is* a desert, — and they have passed like a dream; without one hour of wear-

ness, without a word of discussion. Our sole disquietude has been caused by the state of our health and our affairs."

To his friend and intimate associate, Monsieur Laurent-Jan, Balzac wrote occasionally on the subject of his dramatic work. It is evident that his mind turned to that as the field of his future career. He speaks of it with all his old courage in his last letter to this friend: —

" Dec. 10, 1849.

" MY DEAR LAURENT, — A long and cruel disease of the heart, with many ups and downs, which attacked me in the winter of last year has prevented me from writing except on my inextricable affairs, and, as in duty bound, to my family. But to-day the doctors (there are two) allow me, not to work, but to amuse myself, and I profit by the permission to send you a little line.

" If I get back to Paris within two months I shall be lucky, for it will take nearly that time to complete my cure. I have grievously paid, alas, for the excesses of work in which I indulged, — for the last ten years specially. But don't let us talk of that.

" So, about the beginning of February I shall be in Paris, with the firm intention and desire to work as member of the Society of Dramatic Authors; for in my long days of illness I have thought of more than one theatrical California to work up. But what can I do here? It is impossible to send manuscript over a certain size. The frontiers are closed on account of the war, and no stranger is admitted to the country. I am sure there must be great difficulties in the way of litera-

ture and the arts in France at this time. All is at a standstill, is it not? Shall I find an hilarious public in 1850? It is doubtful. Still, I mean to work. Think, one scene written a day makes three hundred and sixty-five scenes a year, — that is, ten plays. Suppose five fail and three have only partial success; there remain two triumphs, which will be a pretty good result. Yes, courage! If health returns to me I will boldly embark on the dramatic galley laden with good subjects; but God save me from bringing up before a bank of oysters.

“I tell you, my friend, all happiness depends on courage and work. I have had many periods of wretchedness, but with energy, and above all, with illusions, I pulled through them all. That is why I still hope, and hope much.

“We have a learned man here, just from Kurdistan, where he found the Jews of Moses, pure blood.

“We shall meet soon.”

“February 28, 1850.

“MY DEAR SISTER, — I was obliged to go to Kiev to renew my permit and have my passport viséd. Alas! it was fatal to my health. On the second day a terrible blast of wind, which they call here the *chasse-neige*, caught me, though I was so wrapped in furs no spot seemed left for it to reach me, and I took the most dreadful cold I have ever had in my life. . . . But my cherished hopes may be realized. If so, there will be further delays. I must go again to Kiev to take out proper papers. All is probable; for these four or five successive illnesses, and my sufferings from the climate (which I laughed at for her sake) have touched that

noble soul; she is more touched by them than she is, as a sensible woman, frightened by my few remaining debts. I see now that all will go well. . . . In that case my, or rather *our* arrival in the rue Fortunée will take place during the first two weeks in April."

"WIERZSCHOVNIA, March 15, 1850.

"MY DEAR GOOD, BELOVED MOTHER, — Yesterday, at seven in the morning, thanks be to God, my marriage was celebrated in the church of Sainte-Barbe at Berditchef, by a priest sent by the bishop of Jitomir. Monseigneur wished to marry us himself; but being prevented, he sent a very saintly man, the Abbé Count Czarouski, the oldest and most distinguished of the Polish Catholic clergy.

"Madame Èvè de Balzac, your daughter-in-law, has taken (in order to remove all difficulties in the way of our marriage) the heroic resolution, prompted by her sublime maternal affection, of giving all her fortune to her daughter, reserving only an income for herself.

"My return is now certain; but it will depend on a journey to Kiev to alter my passport, and inscribe the name of my wife. . . . We are now two to thank you for all the care you have taken of our house, and to offer you our respectful tenderness.

"Accept the assurance of my respect, and my filial attachment. Your submissive son [*Ton fils soumis*]."

"WIERZSCHOVNIA, March 15, 1850.

"MY DEAR SISTER, — Yesterday, at Berditchef, in the parish church of Sainte-Barbe, a delegate from the bishop of Jitomir blessed and celebrated my marriage. So for

the last twenty-four hours there is a Madame Ève de Balzac, née Comtesse Rzewuska, or a Madame Honoré de Balzac. It is no longer a secret, and I write to you with the least possible delay. . . . The witnesses were Comte Georges Mnischek, my wife's son-in-law, Comte Gustave Olizar, brother-in-law of the Abbé Comte Czaruski, and the priest of the parish of Berditchef. The Comtesse Anna accompanied her mother, both at the summit of happiness. It is, as you know, a marriage of the heart, for Madame Ève de Balzac has given her entire property to her children, — Comte Georges being, perhaps, better to her than any son would have been. . . .

“I hope we shall start for Paris in a fortnight; our journey will consume another fortnight. So, I can now say to you ‘we shall soon meet.’

“Thy brother HONORÉ,
at the summit of happiness.”

His old friend Madame Carraud had met with reverses. Her husband was dead; her means straightened; and she had been obliged to sell the greater part of her property. One of Balzac's first thoughts after his marriage was that it gave him the opportunity to do for her what she had done for him in his dark days.

“WIERZSCHOVNIA, March 17, 1850.

“MY VERY DEAR AND KIND MADAME CARRAUD, — I have put off answering your good and admirable letter until today, for we are such old friends that I cannot let you hear from any one but me of the happy conclusion of that long and beautiful drama of the heart, which has continued through sixteen years.

Three days ago I married the only woman I have loved, whom I now love more than I ever did, whom I shall love till death. I believe this union to be a compensation which God has held in reserve through all my adversities, my years of toil, the difficulties I have met with and finally surmounted. I had no happiness in youth, no blossoming spring-tide, but I shall have a brilliant summer, and the sweetest of all autumns. Perhaps from this point of view my most happy marriage may seem to you a personal consolation, by proving that after many sufferings there are blessings which Providence will, sooner or later, bestow. . . .

“I have so often described you to my wife, and your letter has so fully completed the portrait, that you seem to her a friend of long standing. Therefore with one and the same impulse, the same emotion of the soul, we both offer you a room in our house in Paris, where you can live absolutely as though you were in your own home. What can I say to you? That you are the only one to whom we would make such a proposal, and that you ought to accept it, — or you deserve trouble. For, reflect, did I not go to you in the sacred confidence of friendship, when you were happy and I was struggling through the storm, through the high waves of my equinox, drowned in debt? Now I can have the sweet and tender reprisals of gratitude. . . . Come to us, then, from time to time, to be near your son, to breathe-in art, Paris, elegance; come and see and talk with enlightened people, and refresh yourself in two hearts that love you, — one because you have been so good and tender a friend, the other because you have been all that to me.

“ This is only what I did in the old days at Saint-Cyr, Angoulême, and Frapesle. There I gathered strength; there I had the sights about me that I needed; there my desires were quenched. You shall now know how sweet it was to live so; you shall learn by your own experience all that you were (without knowing it) to me, poor toiler,—misunderstood, weighed down through many years by physical and mental anguish. Ah! I can never forget your motherhood for me; your divine sympathy for suffering. Thinking of all this, and of the way you are bravely facing adversity, I—who have so often struggled with that rough adversary—I tell you I am ashamed of my happiness when I think that you are unhappy. But no, we are both above such pettiness of heart. Each can say to the other that happiness or unhappiness are only forms of being in which great souls can feel they live a stronger life. We know that we need as much philosophic vigor for the one position as for the other; and that the unhappiness which finds true friends is, perhaps, more endurable than the happiness which is envied.

“ So, then, when you come to Paris you will come to us, and without sending word. Come to the rue Fortunée as to your own home, exactly as I used to go to Frapesle. It is my claim, my right. I remind you of what you said to me at Angoulême on the day when I (worn out with writing *Louis Lambert*, and ill, you know why) feared madness, and spoke to you of the way mad people were abandoned. You answered, ‘If you go mad I will take care of you.’ Never have I forgotten those words, your look, the expression of your face; they are all as plain before me as they

were on that June day of 1832. It is in virtue of that promise that I claim you now when I am mad with happiness."

"WIERZSCHOVNIA, April 15, 1850.

"MY DEAR MOTHER, — We are delayed here. I can hardly see to write. I have some trouble in my eyes which prevents either reading or writing. It comes from a draught of air and the present medical treatment. The doctor is not alarmed. He wants me to continue the treatment six days longer. I have had a serious relapse in my heart-trouble and also in the lung. I have lost more ground than I had gained. Every motion that I make stops both speech and breathing.

"Oh, my poor eyes, — once so good!"

"DRESDEN, May 11, 1850.

"We have been three weeks in making a journey which should have taken six days. Sometimes it required fifteen or sixteen men to hoist the carriage out of the mud-holes into which it sank up to the doorways. At last we are here, living, but ill and tired out. Such a journey ages one ten years.

"Let the house be ready, flowers and all, by the 20th. . . . I want Madame Honoré to see it in its best array. There must be flowering-plants in all the jardinières. I mean this for a surprise, and shall say nothing about it. . . . Here is where the plants must be put: 1st, the jardinière in the front room; 2d, that in the Japanese salon; 3d, the two in the bedroom with the cupola; 4th, I want cape jessamine in the two tiny jardinières on the fireplace of the gray room with eupola; 5th, the two large jardinières on the staircase

landings; 6th, small ferns in the two bowls which Feuchères mounted. I don't know whether Grobé has finished the jardinière in marquetry for the green salon. If done (it must stand between the writing-table and the cabinet in marquetry), I want it filled with *beautiful, beautiful flowers.*"

"There is a Turkish proverb," says Gautier, in the essay from which we have already quoted, "which declares that when the house is finished death enters. Nothing is so to be dreaded as a wish realized. His debts were paid, the longed-for marriage accomplished, the nest for his happiness lined with down, and (as if they foresaw the coming end) even his enemies were beginning to praise him. It was all too good; nothing remained for him but to die. His illness made rapid progress; but no one dreamed of a fatal end, we had such confidence in Balzac's athletic constitution; we thought he would bury us all.

"I was about to make a journey into Italy, and before leaving I went to say good-by to my illustrious friend in the rue Fortunée, where he had arrived with his wife a few weeks earlier. He had just driven out to the custom-house, the servant said, to recover some foreign curiosities. I left the house reassured; and the next day I received a note from Madame de Balzac, dated June 20, which kindly explained, with polite regrets, why I had not found her husband at home. At the bottom of the letter Balzac had scrawled these words:—

" 'I can no longer read or write.

' "DE BALZAC." "

“I have kept that sorrowful line, — the last, probably, that the author of the *Comédie Humaine* ever wrote. It was, though I did not comprehend it at the time, the supreme cry of the thinker and the worker: ‘*It is finished!*’ The thought that Balzac could die never once came to me.

“A few weeks later I was at Florian’s on the Piazza San Marco; the ‘*Journal des Débats*,’ one of the few French papers which reach Venice, lay beside me. I took it up and read the death of Balzac. I nearly fell upon the marble pavement; and my grief was suddenly mingled with a feeling of indignation and rebellion that was not Christian, for all souls are alike in the sight of God. I had that morning visited the insane hospital on the island of San Servolo, and had seen decrepit idiots, drivelling old men, human larvæ no longer directed by even animal instincts, and I asked myself why that luminous brain was put out like the snuff of a candle when the vital spark remained in those darkened heads with a fitful gleam.”

Victor Hugo saw Balzac dying and dead, and the words in which he tells of that death-bed and the parting scene in Père-Lachaise may fitly end this memoir:

“On the 18th of August, 1850, my wife, who had been that morning to call on Madame de Balzac, told me that Balzac was dying.

“My uncle, General Louis Hugo, was dining with us, but as soon as we rose from table I left him and took a cab to the rue Fortunée, quartier Beaujon, where M. de Balzac lived. He had bought what re-

mained of the hôtel of M. de Beaujon, a few buildings which had escaped the general demolition, and out of them he had made a charming little house, elegantly furnished, with a porte cochère on the street, and in place of a garden a long, narrow, paved courtyard, with flower-beds about it here and there.

“I rang. The moon was veiled by clouds; the street deserted. No one came. I rang again. The gate opened; a woman came forward, weeping. I gave my name, and was told to enter the salon, which was on the ground-floor. On a pedestal opposite the fireplace was the colossal bust by David. A wax-candle was burning on a handsome oval table in the middle of the room.

“Another woman came in, also weeping, and said to me: ‘He is dying; Madame has gone to her room. The doctors gave him up yesterday. . . . They all said, ‘We can do nothing for him.’” The night was dreadful. This morning at nine o’clock Monsieur became speechless. Madame sent for a priest, who came and administered extreme unction. Monsieur made a sign that he understood it. An hour later he pressed the hand of his sister, Madame Surville. But since midday the rattle is in his throat, and he sees nothing. He cannot live out the night. If you wish me to do so, I will call Monsieur Surville, who has not yet gone to bed.’

“Monsieur Surville confirmed all the servant had said. I asked to see Monsieur de Balzac. We passed along a corridor, and up a staircase carpeted in red, and crowded with works of art of all kinds, vases, pictures, statues, paintings, brackets bearing porcelains; then

Balzac after death.

Drawing made by Eugène Giraud, and bequeathed by Mme. de Balzac to her niece, who permitted Lord Lyon to take this photograph.



through another corridor, where I saw an open door. I heard a loud and difficult breathing. I was in Monsieur de Balzac's bedroom.

“The bed was in the middle of the room. M. de Balzac lay in it, his head supported by a mound of pillows, to which had been added the red damask cushions of the sofa. His face was purple, almost black, inclining to the right. The hair was gray, and cut rather short. His eyes were open and fixed. I saw his side face only, and, thus seen, he was like Napoleon. . . .

“A light near the bed fell on the portrait of a young man, rosy and smiling, hanging over the mantel-piece. I raised the coverlet and took Balzac's hand. It was moist with perspiration. I pressed it; he made no answer to the pressure.

“The room was the same in which I had seen him a month earlier, gay, full of hope, certain of his recovery. We talked and argued long, politically. He reproached me for my ‘demagogy.’ He himself was legitimist. He said to me: ‘How can you renounce with such serenity the rank of peer of France, the noblest of all titles except that of King of France?’ He also said: ‘I have bought this house of M. de Beaujon without the garden, but with the gallery leading into the little church at the corner of the street. I have a door on my staircase which leads into the church; a turn of the lock and I am there at mass. I care more for that little gallery than for the garden.’

“When I left him he followed me to the staircase, walking painfully, to show me this door. Then he called to his wife: ‘Be sure you show Hugo all my pictures.’

“The nurse said, ‘He will die at daybreak.’

“I turned away, bearing with me the remembrance of that livid face. As I crossed the salon I looked again at the bust, immovable, impassive, proud, and vaguely beaming, and I compared death with immortality. This was Sunday. They buried him on Wednesday. He was first taken to the Chapel Beaujon, through the door which, to him, had been more precious than the gardens of his predecessor.

“Edmond Giraud had made his portrait on the day of his death.

“The funeral services took place at Saint-Philippe-du-Roule. The minister of the Interior, Baroche, sat beside me in church, close to the coffin. He said to me: ‘This was a very distinguished man.’ I replied, ‘He was a man of genius.’ The procession crossed Paris and went to Père-Lachaise along the boulevards. Rain was falling as we left the church and until we reached the cemetery. It was one of those days when the heavens seem to weep. We walked the whole distance. I was on the right at the head of the coffin, holding one of the silver tassels of the pall. The other pall-bearers were Alexandre Dumas, Monsieur Baroche, and Sainte-Beuve.

“When we reached the grave, which was on the brow of the hill, the crowd was immense; the path was narrow and steep; the horses could hardly draw the hearse, and it threatened to slide backward. . . . The coffin was lowered into the grave, which is near to those of Charles Nodier and Casimir Delavigne. The priest said a last prayer, and I a few words. While I was speaking the sun went down. All Paris lay before me

afar off in the splendid mists of the sinking light, the glow of which appeared to fall into the grave at my feet as the dull noise of the earth upon the coffin interrupted my last words : —

“ ‘No, it is not the Unknown to him. No, I have said it before, and I shall never weary of saying it, — no, it is not darkness to him, it is Light! It is not the end, but the beginning; not nothingness, but eternity! Is not this true, ye who listen to me? Such coffins proclaim immortality. In presence of certain illustrious dead we feel the divine destiny of that intellect which has traversed earth to suffer and be purified. Do we not say to ourselves here, to-day, that it is impossible that a great genius in this life can be other than a great spirit after death?’ ”

Let us leave him there where they laid him — the spot on which he stood in his inspired youth, and thought: “The noblest epitaphs are the single names, — La Fontaine, Molière, — names that tell all and make the passer dream.”¹

¹ See Appendix VII, Vindication of Balzac.

APPENDIX.

I.

COMPLETE WORKS OF H. DE BALZAC.

BALZAC did not form the idea of combining his works into the great whole of "La Comédie Humaine" before the year 1842. Until then these works were published, many of them piecemeal, in a bewildering variety of ways. From the time the first edition of "La Comédie Humaine" was published, in 1842, he continued, until his death, to add new volumes to it, and to remodel his old work, changing dates, and nearly all the names of his principal personages. The result of this immense labor appears in the "Édition Définitive des Œuvres Complètes de H. de Balzac, 24 vols., Calmann Lévy, Paris." That edition contains the whole of Balzac's acknowledged work, of every kind. The following bibliography is based upon it, and is a transcript from M. le Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul's persevering, exhaustive, and authoritative work on Balzac's writings. The Preface to "La Comédie Humaine" explains Balzac's meaning in classing the work into groups of "Scenes."

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE.

SCÈNES DE LA VIE PRIVÉE.

(Vols. I. to IV. Édition Définitive.)

Name.	Date.	Dedication.
Préface.		
La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote	1829	Mlle. Marie de Montheau.
Le Bal de Sceaux	1829	Henry de Balzac.
Mémoires de deux jeunes Mariées	1841	George Sand.
La Bourse	1832	à Sofka.
Modeste Mignon	1844	à une Polonaise [Mme. Hanska].
Un Début dans la vie	1842	à Laure [Mme. Surville].
Albert Savarus	1842	Mme. de Girardin.
La Vendetta	1830	à Puttinati.
Une double famille	1830	La Comtesse Louise de Turhein.
La Paix du ménage	1829	Mlle. Valentine Surville.
Madame Firmiani	1832	Alexandre de Berny.
Étude de femme	1830	Jean-Charles de Negro.
La Fausse maîtresse	1842	La Comtesse Clara Maffei.
Une Fille d'Ève	1838	La Ctsse. Bolognini, née Vimercati.
Le Message	1832	Marquis Damaro Pareto.
La Grenadière	1832	à Caroline.
La Femme abandonnée	1832	La Duchesse d'Abrantès.
Honorine	1843	Achille Devéria.
Béatrix	1838	à Sarah.
Gobseck	1830	Baron Barchou de Penhoën.
La Femme de trente ans	1834	Louis Boulanger.
Le Père Goriot	1834	Geoffroy de Saint-Hilaire.
Le Colonel Chabert	1832	La Comtesse Ida de Bocarmé.
La Messe de l'Athée	1836	Auguste Borget.
L'Interdiction	1836	Contre-Amiral Bazoche.
Le Contrat de mariage	1835	Giacomo Rossini.
Autre étude de femme	1839	Léon Gozlan.
La Grande Bretèche	1832	

SCÈNES DE LA VIE DE PROVINCE.

(Vols. V. to VII. Édition Définitive.)

Name.	Date.	Dedication.
Ursule Mirouët	1841	Mlle. Sophie Surville.
Engénie Grandet	1833	à Maria.
Le Lys dans la vallée	1835	Docteur J. B. Nacquart.
Pierrette	1839	Mlle. Anna Hanska.
Le Curé de Tours	1832	David (d'Angers).
Le Ménage d'un garçon	1842	Charles Nodier.
L'Illustre Gandissart	1833	La Duchesse de Castries.
La Muse du département	1843	Comte Ferdinand de Gramont.
La Vieille fille	1836	E. Midy de la Greneraye-Surville.
Le Cabinet des Antiques	1837	Baron Hammer-Purgstall.
Les Illusions Perdues	1836	Victor Hugo.

SCÈNES DE LA VIE PARISIENNE.

(Vols. VIII. to XI. Édition Définitive.)

Ferragus	1833	Hector Berlioz.
La Duchesse de Langeais	1834	Franz Liszt.
La Fille aux yeux d'or	1834	Engène Delacroix.
La Grandeur et la Décadence de César Birotteau	1837	Alphonse de Lamartine.
La Maison Nucingen	1837	Mme. Zulma Carraud.
Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes	1838	Prince Alphonso Serafino di Porcia.
Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan	1839	Théophile Gautier.
Facino Cane	1836	à Louise.
Sarrasine	1830	Charles de Bernard du Grail.
Pierre Grassou	1839	Lieut.-Colonel Periollas.
La Cousine Bette	1846	Prince di Teano.
Le Cousin Pons	1847	Prince di Teano.
Un Prince de la Bohême	1839	Henri Heine.
Gaudissart II.	1844	La Princesse Belgiojoso.
Les Employés	1836	La Ctsse. Seraphina San-Severino.
Les Comédiens sans le savoir	1845	Comte Jules de Castellane.
Les Petits Bourgeois	1845	à Constance Victoire.

SCÈNES DE LA VIE MILITAIRE.

(Vol. XII. Édition Définitive.)

Name.	Date.	Dedication.
Les Chouans	1827	Théodore Dablin.
Une Passion dans le désert	1830	

SCÈNES DE LA VIE POLITIQUE.

(Vols. XII. and XIII. Édition Définitive.)

Un Épisode sous la Terreur	1831	M. Guyonnet-Merville.
Une Ténébreuse Affaire . .	1841	M. de Margonne.
Z. Marcas	1840	Comte Guillaume de Wurtemberg.
L'Envers de l'Histoire contemporaine	1847	
Le Député d'Arcis.		

SCÈNES DE LA VIE DE CAMPAGNE.

(Vols. XIII. and XIV. Édition Définitive.)

Le Médecin de campagne . .	1832	à ma Mère.
Le Curé de village	1837	à Hélène.
Les Paysans	1845	P. S. B. Gavault.

ÉTUDES PHILOSOPHIQUES.

(Vols. XV. to XVII. Édition Définitive.)

La Peau de Chagrin	1830	M. Savary.
Jésus-Christ en Flandres . .	1831	Mme. Desbordes-Valmore.
Melmoth réconcilié	1835	Général Baron de Pommereul.
Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu . .	1832	à un Lord.
Gambara	1837	Marquis de Belloy.
Massimilla Doni	1839	Jacques Strunz.
La Recherche de l'Absolu . .	1834	Mme. Joséphine Delannoy.
L'Enfant Maudit	1831	La Baronne James de Rothschild.
Les Maranas	1832	La Comtesse Merlin.
Adieu	1830	Prince Frédéric de Swartzemburg.
Le Réquisitionnaire	1831	M. de la Ribellerie.
El Verdugo	1829	Martinez de la Rosa.
Un Drame au bord de la mer	1834	{ La Princesse Caroline Galitzin de Genthod.

Name.	Date.	Dedication.
L'Auberge rouge	1831	Marquis de Custine.
L'Élixir de longue vie	1830	Au Lecteur.
Maitre Cornélius	1831	Comte Georges Mniszczek.
Cathérine de Médicis	1836	Marquis de Pastoret.
Les Proscrits	1831	Almæ Sorori.
Louis Lambert	1832	Et nunc et semper dilectæ dicatum.
Séraphita	1833	Mme. Evéline Hanska, née Comtesse Rzewuska.

ÉTUDES ANALYTIQUES.

(Vol. XVII. Édition Définitive.)

La Physiologie du mariage	1829	Au Lecteur.
Petites misères de la vie conjugale.		

(End of La Comédie Humaine.)

THÉÂTRE.

(Vol. XVIII. Édition Définitive.)

Vautrin	Drame 5 Actes	Porte Saint Martin	1840.
Les Ressources de Quinola	Comédie 5 Actes	Odéon	1842.
Paméla Giraud	Drame 5 Actes	Gaieté	1843.
La Marâtre	Drame 5 Actes	Théâtre Historique	1848.
Le Faiseur (Mercadet)	Comédie 5 Actes	Gymnase	1851.

(Vol. XIX. Édition Définitive.)

Les Contes Drolatiques.

ŒUVRES DIVERSES.

(Vols. XX. to XXIII. Édition Définitive.)

Contes et Nouvelles et Essais Analytiques	in all	41
Physiognomies et esquisses Parisiennes	in all	27
Croquis et fantaisies	in all	39
Portraits et critiques littéraires. Polémique Judiciaire	in all	25
Études Historiques et Politiques	in all	36

(Vol. XXIV. Édition Définitive.)

Correspondance de H. de Balzac	No. of letters	384
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These works are contained, in the foregoing sequence, in the Édition Définitive des Œuvres complètes de H. de Balzac, 24 vols. Calmann

Lévy. Paris, 1879. The above list, and the two succeeding ones are made from those contained in the bibliographical work of M. le Vicomte de Spoelherch de Lovenjoul: *Histoire des Œuvres de H. de Balzac*. Calmann Lévy. Paris. 1 vol. pp. 498.

II.

COMPLETE WORKS OF H. DE BALZAC.

WITH YEAR OF COMPOSITION:

(All tales, essays, sketches, portraits, criticisms, studies, etc., on the following list which are not named on the foregoing list as being in *La Comédie Humaine*, the *Theatre*, and the *Contes Drolatiques*, will be found in Vols. XX. to XXIII. *Édition Définitive*, except such as are among the *Œuvres de jeunesse*.)

	1829.	Des Artistes.
		La Paix du Ménage.
Les Chouans.		La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote.
Fragoletta, Latouche.		Le Bal de Sceaux.
Physiologie du mariage.		La Vendetta.
		Gobseck.
		Une double famille.
	1830.	Le Bibliophile Jacob.
		Le Charlatan.
Étude de mœurs par les gants.		Les Deux Rêves (Cathérine de Médicis).
El Verdugo.		L'Oisif et le Travailleur.
Une vue de Touraine.		Madame Toutendieu.
Complaintes satiriques sur les mœurs du temps.		Mœurs aquatiques.
Un Homme malheureux.		Des Mots à la mode.
L'Usurier (fragment de Gobseck).		De la Mode en littérature.
Étude de femme.		Nouvelle Théorie du déjeuner.
Visites.		Études pour Le Feuilleton des Journaux Politiques.
Voyage pour l'Eternité.		Adieu.
L'Épicier.		

- La Jeunesse française.
 Étude de Philosophie morale sur
 les habitants du Jardin des
 Plantes.
 De la vie de château.
 Physiologie de la toilette.
 Physiologie gastronomique.
 Gavarni.
 Le Ministre.
 Un Entr'acte.
 Une Vue du grande monde.
 L'Élixir de longue vie.
 Traité de la vie élégante.
 L'Archevêque.
 Renseignements.
 Les Voisins.
 Une Consultation.
 L'Opium.
 La Reconnaissance du gamin.
 La Colique.
 La Comédie du Diable.
 Fragment d'une Satire Ménippée.
 Des Salons littéraires et des mots
 élogieux.
 La Tour de la Birette.
 Le Garçon de Bureau.
 La Dernière Revue de Napoléon.
 Sarrasine.
 Des Caricatures.
 Une Lutte.
 Les Litanies romantiques.
 La Danse des Pierres (fragment
 de Jésus-Christ en Flandres).
 Le Petit Mercier (Hist. des Treize).
 La Mort de ma Tante.
 Le dernier napoléon (Peau de
 Chagrin).
 De ce qui n'est pas à la mode.
 Une Garde.
 Si j'étais riche.
 Vengeance d'artiste.
 Entre Filets, I.
- Une Passion dans le désert.
 Une Inconséquence.
 Entre-Filets, II, III.
 Un Épisode sous la Terreur.
 Souvenir d'un paria.
 Lettres sur Paris.
- 1831.**
- Les Deux Dragons.
 La Grisette.
 L'Amour.
 Le Marchand de bustes.
 Une Passion au collège.
 La Femme de trente ans, 1^{re} partie.
 L'Enfant maudit, 1^{re} partie.
 La Pièce nouvelle et la Débüt.
 Un Lendemain.
 Histoire de giberne.
 La cour des Messagères-royales.
 Ci-git la muse de Béranger.
 Une charge de dragons.
 La Réquisitionnaire.
 Une Famille politique.
 Un commis-voyageur de la Lib-
 erté.
 Mécanisme intellectuel, etc.
 Saint-Simonien et Saint-Simoniste.
 Paris en 1831.
 Un Importun.
 Un Député d'alors.
 La Femme de Trente ans, 2^e partie.
 Le Cornac de Carlsruhe.
 Le Dimanche.
 Opinion de mon épicière.
 Longchamps.
 L'Embascade.
 Une semaine de la Chambre des
 Députés.
 De l'Indifférence en matière poli-
 tique.

- Des signes particulières, etc.
 Enquête sur la politique de, etc.
 Tableau d'un intérieur de famille.
 Le Provincial.
 Inconvénients de la presse, etc.
 La Patriotisme de Clarice.
 D'un pantalon de foie de chèvre.
 Le suicide d'un poète.
 Une Débauche (Peau de Chagrin).
 Les Proscrits.
 Un déjeuner sous le pont Royal.
 La Belle Impéria (Contes Drolatiques).
 Ordre public.
 Une séance à l'hôtel Bullion.
 Conseil des ministres.
 Croquis.
 Don Pedro II.
 Manière de faire une émeute.
 Un conspirateur moderne.
 Physiologie des positions.
 Rondo brillant et facile.
 Le Banquier.
 Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu.
 Physiologie de l'adjoint.
 Deux rencontres en un an.
 Les Grands Acrobates.
 Un Fait personnel.
 L'Auberge rouge.
 La Peau de Chagrin.
 Le Claqueur.
 Vingt et un Septembre, 1822.
 Jésus-Christ en Flandres.
 La Comédie du Diable.
 La Femme de trente ans.
 Le Sous-préfet.
 Exaltation des ministres.
 Moralité d'une bouteille de Champagne.
 Critiques publiées dans La Caricature.
 Physiologie du cigare.
- La Fortune en 1831.
 Grand Concert vocal et instrumental.
 L'Embarras du choix.
 Six degrés du crime Six degrés de la vertu.
 Détails sur un préfet de police.
 Maître Cornélius.
 La Dôme des Invalides.
- 1832.**
- Un journée du nez de M. d'Argout.
 Deux destinées d'homme.
 Religion Saint-Simonienne.
 Le Départ.
 Histoire du Chevalier de Beauvoir.
 Le Grand d'Espagne.
 Échantillon de causeries françaises.
 La Maîtresse de notre colonel.
 Départ d'une diligence.
 Voilà mon homme.
 Madame Firmiani.
 Le Message.
 Le Colonel Chahert.
 Procès de La Caricature.
 Sur le monument du Duc de Berry.
 Le Philipotin.
 Terme d'Avril.
 La vie d'une femme.
 Facéties cholériques.
 Contes Drolatiques (1^{er} Dixain).
 Le Refus.
 Le Curé de Tours.
 La Grande Bretèche.
 Le Conseil.
 Enseignement.
 La Bourse.
 Sur la situation du parti royaliste.
 La Femme abandonnée.
 Lettre à Charles Nodier.

- Lnnis Lambert.
 Voyage à Java.
 La Grenadière.
 Critiques publiées dans la Caricature.
 Les Marana.
- 1833.**
- Critiques publiées dans la Caricature.
 Préface de l'Histoire des Treize.
 Histoire des Treize, 1^{er} épisode.
 Histoire des Treize, 2^e épisode.
 Le Prosne du joyeux curé de Meudon.
 Histoire de l'Empereur.
 Contes Drolatiques, 2^e Dizain.
 Théorie de la démarche.
 Persévérance d'amour.
 La Muse du Département.
 Le Médecin de campagne.
 Eugénie Grandet.
 L'Illustre Gaudissart.
- 1834.**
- Les Jeunes Gens de Paris.
 Histoire des Treize, 3^e épisode.
 La Femme de Trente ans.
 La Recherche de l'absolu.
 Séraphita.
 Lettre aux Écrivains français du xix. siècle.
 Aventures d'une idée heureuse (fragment).
 Le Père Goriot.
- 1835.**
- Un Drame au bord de la mer.
 Melmoth réconcilié.
- Lettre inédit de Louis Lambert.
 Histoire des Treize (fin).
 Le Contrat de Mariage.
 Le Lys dans la vallée.
 Séraphita (fin).
 Brillat-Savarin.
- 1836.**
- La Messe de l'Athée.
 L'Interdiction.
 Études critiques, Chronique de Paris.
 La France et l'Étranger.
 Le Cabinet des Antiques.
 Facino Cane.
 Ecce Homo.
 Le Lys dans la vallée (fin).
 Histoire du procès du Lys.
 L'Enfant maudit, 2^e partie.
 La Vieille Fille.
 La confidence des Ruggieri.
- 1837.**
- Les Illusions perdues, 1^{ère} partie.
 Les Martyrs ignorés.
 Les Employés, 1^{er} partie.
 Gambara.
 Contes drolatiques, 3^e Dizain.
 César Birotteau.
 Six rois de France.
- 1838.**
- Le Cabinet des antiques (fin).
 Splendeurs et Misères des courtisanes.
 Les Employés (fin).
 La Maison Nucingen.
 Traité des excitants modernes.
 Une Fille d'Ève.

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| <p>1839.</p> <p>Le Curé du village.
Béatrix.
Illusions perdues, 2^e partie.
Lettre à propos du Curé de village.
Massimilla Doni.
Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan.
Mémoire sur le procès Peytel.
Procès de la Société des Gens-de-lettres.
Petites Misères de la vie conjugale.
Le Notaire.
L'Épicier.</p> | <p>Mém. de Deux Jeunes Mariées.
Cathérine de Médicis.</p> |
| <p>1840.</p> <p>Pierrette.
Vautrin. (Drame.)
Z. Marcas.
Revue Parisienne.
Un Prince de la Bohème.
Peines de cœur d'une chatte Anglaise.
Guide-Âne, etc.
Monographie du rentier.
Pierre Grassou.
La Femme de Province.
La Femme comme il faut.</p> | <p>1842.</p> <p>Les Ressources des Quinola. (Comédie.)
Albert Savarus.
Un Début dans la vie.
Les Méchancetés d'un saint.
La Chine et les Chinois.
Un Ménage de garçon.
Les Amours de deux bêtes.
Autre Étude de femme.
Avant-propos de la Comédie Humaine.</p> |
| <p>1841.</p> <p>Une Ténébreuse Affaire.
Les Deux Frères.
Notes remises à MM. les députés.
Le Martyr Calviniste.
Ursule Mirouët.
La Fausse Maîtresse.
Voyage d'un lion d'Afrique.
Physiologie de l'employé.</p> | <p>1843.</p> <p>Tony Sans-soin.
Sur Cathérine de Médicis.
Honorine.
Monographie de la presse Parisienne.
La Muse du département (fin).
Spl. et Misères de courtisanes (fin).
Illusions Perdues, 3^e partie.
Paméla Giraud. (Drame.)
Madame de la Chanterie.</p> |
| | <p>1844.</p> <p>Modeste Mignon.
Gaudissart II.
Les Paysans.
Les Comédiens sans le savoir.
Histoire et Physiologie des boulevards de Paris.
Ce qui disparaît de Paris.
Béatrix (fin).</p> |

1845.

Une rue de Paris et son habitant.
 Le Luther des chapeaux.
 Un Homme d'affaires.
 Petites Misères de la vie conjugale.

1848.

Profession de foi politique.
 La Marâtre. (Drame.)
 L'Envers de l'Hist. Contem. (fin).

Posthume.

1846.

Une Prédiction.
 Lettres à Hippolyte Castille.
 Les Parents Pauvres, 1^{re} partie.
 L'Envers de l'Hist. contemporaine.

La Filandière.
 Fragments, Revue Parisienne.
 Le Faiseur (Mercadet).
 Code Littéraire.
 Les Petits Bourgeois.
 Le monde comme il est, etc.

1847.

Les Parents Pauvres, 2^e partie.
 Le Député d'Arcis (commence-
 ment).

Inédit.

L'École des Ménages.
 Étude sur la Russie (1849).

III.

TITLES OF BOOKS, TALES, AND PLAYS ·

ANNOUNCED BY BALZAC, BUT NEVER PUBLISHED.

(Those relating to the Wars of the Empire were intended for Les Scènes Militaires.)

L'Absolution.
 Une Actrice en voyage.
 A marches forcées.
 Les Amours d'une laide.
 Anatomie des Corps Enseignants.
 Les Anglais en Espagne.
 Anunciata. (Play.)
 Après Dresde.
 L'Armée roulante.
 L'Armée roulante. (Play.)

L'Attaché d'Ambassade.
 L'Aubergiste.
 La Bataille de Dresde.
 Une Bataille vue de l'Empire.
 La Campagne de France.
 Causeries du Soir.
 Le Chrétien.
 Le Combat.
 La Comédie d'amour. (Play.)
 Comment on fait un ministère.

- La Conspiration Prudhomme.
 “ “ “ (Play.)
 Le Corsaire Algérien.
 Les Courtisans. (Play.)
 Une Croisière.
 Débuts d'un homme politique.
 Le Dernier champ-de-bataille.
 Les Deux ambitieux.
 Les Deux amours.
 Deux bienfaiteurs de l'humanité.
 Les Deux Extrêmes.
 Les Deux Sculpteurs.
 Dialogue Philosophique et Poli-
 tique sur la perfection du XIX.
 siècle.
 Le Diplomate.
 Distraction.
 Une Douleureuse histoire.
 L'Émir.
 Les Enfants.
 L'Entrée en campagne.
 Entre Savants.
 Les Environs de Paris.
 Étude sur la Russie.
 La Fille et la Femme. (Play.)
 Fragment d'Histoire générale.
 Les Français en Egypte. 3 épi-
 sodes.
 La Frélore.
 La Garde Consulaire.
 Gendres et Belles-Mères.
 Les Gens ridés.
 Gohseck. (Play.)
 Les Grands l'Hôpital, le Peuple.
 Le grand Pénitencier.
 Les Héritiers Boirouge.
 Histoire du succession du Marquis
 de Carabas dans le fief du Co-
 quatrix.
 L'Histoire et le Roman.
 Intérieur de Collège.
 Jacques de Metz.
 Le Juge de Paix.
 Le Juge d'Instruction.
 Le Mariage de Prudhomme. (Play.)
 Le Ministre. (Play.)
 Le Ministre. (Novel.)
 Les Mitouflet.
 Monographie de la Vertu.
 Moscou.
 Le Nouvel Abeilard.
 Orgon. (Play.)
 L'Original.
 Les Partisans.
 Pathologie de la vie sociale.
 La Pénissière.
 Un Pensionnat de demoiselles.
 Le Père prodigue. (Play.)
 Les Petit Bourgeois. (Play.)
 Le Philanthrope.
 Pierre et Cathérine. (Play.)
 Les Pontons.
 Le Prêtre catholique.
 Le Privilège, tableau du XV. siècle.
 Le Prophète.
 Richard Cœur d'éponge. (Play.)
 Le Roi des Mendians. (Play.)
 Scènes de la vie du monde.
 Sœur Marie des Anges.
 Les Soldats de la République.
 Sophie Prudhomme. (Play.)
 Sous Vienne. 3 épisodes.
 La Succession Pons. (Play.)
 Le Théâtre comme il est.
 Les Trainards.
 Les Trois Cardinaux.
 La Veille et le Lendemain. (Play.)
 Les Vendéens, guerres civiles au
 XIX. siècle.
 La vie et aventures d'une idée.
 Une vue de Paris.

TITLES OF EARLY WORKS (ŒUVRES DE JEUNESSE)

(Never acknowledged by Balzac, and not included in the *Édition Définitive*.)

L'Héritière de Birague, par A. de Viellerglé et Lord R'hoone.
 Jean-Louis, ou La Fille trouvée, par les mêmes.
 Clotilde de Lusignan, ou Le Beau Jnif, par Lord R'hoone.
 Le Centenaire, par Horace de Saint-Aubin.
 Le Vicaire des Ardennes, par le même.
 La Dernière Fée, ou La Nouvelle lampe merveilleuse, par le même.
 Annette, ou Le Criminel, par le même.
 Wann Chlore, Jane la pâle, par le même.
 L'Excommunié, par le même.
 Dom Gigadas, par le même.

IV.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES IN THE COMEDY
OF HUMAN LIFE.A PARTIAL LIST WITH VOLS. IN WHICH THEY APPEAR.¹

AJUDA PINTO (Marquis d'). Père Goriot. Lucien de Rubempré.
 Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Béatrix
 ARTHÈZ (Daniel d'). Great Man of the Provinces in Paris. Memoirs
 of Two Young Married Women. Secrets of the Princesse de
 Cadignan. Deputy of Arcis.
 BLANCHON (Horace). Père Goriot. Atheist's Mass. César Birotteau.
 Commission in Linnacy. Lucien de Rubempré. The Two
 Brothers. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Bureaucracy.
 Pierrette. Study of Woman. Last Incarnation of Vautrin.
 Brotherhood of Consolation. Magic Skin. A Double Life.

¹ Selected from the 2,247 personages (names and aliases) given, with a brief history of each, in the valuable and pains-taking volume of MM. Anatole Cerfberr and Jules Christophe, entitled, "Répertoire de la Comédie Humaine de H. de Balzac." 1 vol., 563 pp. Calmann Lévy, Paris.

- Memoirs of Two Young Married Women. Paz. Cousin Bette. Village Rector. A Double Life. Lesser Bourgeoisie.
- BIXIOU** (Jean Jacques). The Two Brothers. Bureaucracy. The Purse. Modeste Mignon. Lucien de Rubempré. Nucingen and Co. Cousin Bette. Deputy of Arcis. Béatrix. Comedies played Gratis. Unconscious Comedians. Cousin Pons.
- BLONDET** (Émile). An Old Maid. Gallery of Antiquities. Great Man of the Provinces. Lucien de Rubempré. Modeste Mignon. Another Study of Woman. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Daughter of Eve. Nucingen and Co. Sons of the Soil.
- BONAPARTE** (Napoléon). Vendetta. Historical Mystery. Colonel Chabert. Peace of a Home. Facino Cane. Country Doctor.
- BRIDAU** (Joseph). The Two Brothers. Great Man of the Provinces. Start in Life. Modeste Mignon. The Purse. Another Study of Woman. Pierre Grassou. Memoirs of Two Young Married Women. Cousin Bette. Deputy of Arcis.
- CAMUSOT** (dealer in silks). Great Man of the Provinces. Two Brothers. César Birotteau. Fame and Sorrow.
- CAMUSOT**, de Marville and wife. Cousin Pons. Vendetta. Gallery of Antiquities. Commission in Lunacy. Lucien de Rubempré. Last Incarnation of Vautrin.
- CANALIS** (Baron de). Memoirs of Two Young Married Women. Great Man of the Provinces. Modeste Mignon. Magic Skin. Another Study of Woman. A Start in Life. Béatrix. Unconscious Comedians. Deputy of Arcis.
- CINQ-CYGNE** (Laurence de). An Historical Mystery. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Brotherhood of Consolation. Deputy of Arcis.
- COLLIN** (Jacques). Père Goriot. Great Man of the Provinces. Lucien de Rubempré. Last Incarnation of Vautrin. Deputy of Arcis.
- CORENTIN**. The Chouans. Historical Mystery. Lucien de Rubempré. Last Incarnation of Vautrin. Lesser Bourgeoisie.
- DERVILLE**. A Start in Life. Historical Mystery. Père Goriot. Gobseck. Colonel Chabert. Lucien de Rubempré.
- DESFLEINS**. Atheist's Mass. Cousin Pons. Great Man of the Provinces. Ferragus. Bureaucracy. Pierrette. Two Brothers. Modeste Mignon. Lucien de Rubempré. Last Incarnation.
- ESPAUD** (Marquise d'). Commission in Lunacy. Great Man of the Provinces. Lucien de Rubempré. Memoirs of Two Young Married Women. Another Study of Woman. Historical Mystery. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Daughter of Eve. Béatrix. Deputy of Arcis.

- FIRMIANI** (Mme. de Camps). Madame Firmiani. Bureaucracy
Daughter of Eve. Deputy of Arcis.
- FONTAINE** (Madame). Unconscious Comedians. Cousin Pons. Deputy of Arcis.
- GOBSECK** (Jean-Esther van). Père Goriot. César Birotteau.
Bureaucracy. Unconscious Comedians. Gobseck.
- GRANDLIEU** (Family of). Historical Mystery. Ferragus. Duchesse de Langeais. Two Brothers. Modeste Mignon. Lucien de Rubempré. Last Incarnation of Vautrin. The Hated Son. Gallery of Antiquities. Béatrix. Daughter of Eve. Colonel Chabert. Gobseck.
- GRANVILLE** (Comte de). Historical Mystery. A Double Life. César Birotteau. Lucien de Rubempré. Last Incarnation of Vautrin. Daughter of Eve. Cousin Pons.
- GRANVILLE** (Vicomte de). The Village Rector. Daughter of Eve.
- LA BASTIE DE LA BRIÈRE** (Madame). Modeste Mignon. Deputy of Arcis. Cousin Bette.
- LAMBERT** (Louis). Lost Illusions. Drama on the Sea Shore. Louis Lambert.
- LORA** (Léon de). A Start in Life. Unconscious Comedians. Two Brothers. Pierre Grassou. Cousin Bette. Béatrix.
- MAGUS** (Élie). Vendetta. Marriage Contract. Cousin Pons. Pierre Grassou.
- MARSAY** (Henri de). Père Goriot. Unconscious Comedians. Another Study of Woman. Lily of the Valley. Gallery of Antiquities. Great Man of the Provinces. Ursula. Memoirs of Two Young Married Women. Rural Ball. Modeste Mignon. Daughter of Eve. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Historical Mystery.
- MAUFRIGNEUSE** (Diane de). Modeste Mignon. Gallery of Antiquities. Lucien de Rubempré. Last Incarnation of Vautrin. Memoirs of Two Young Married Women. Historical Mystery. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Another Study of Woman. Deputy of Arcis.
- MONTCORNET** (Général). Peace of a Home. Great Man of the Provinces. Lucien de Rubempré. Cousin Bette. Sons of the Soil.
- MONTRIVEAU** (Général). Duchesse de Langeais. Père Goriot. Great Man of the Provinces. Another Study of Woman. Pierrette. Deputy of Arcis.
- NUCINGEN** (Baron de). Père Goriot. Pierrette. César Birotteau. Nucingen and Co. Great Man of the Provinces. Lucien de Rubempré. Unconscious Comedians. Cousin Bette.

- PHELLION.** Bureaucracy. Lesser Bourgeoisie.
POPINOT (Judge). César Birotteau. Commission in Lunacy. Brotherhood of Consolation. Lesser Bourgeoisie.
POPINOT (Anselme). César Birotteau. Illustrious Gaudissart. Cousin Pons. Cousin Bette.
PORTENDUÈRE (Mme. de). Ursula. Another Study of Woman. Béatrix.
RABOURDIN (Xavier). Bureaucracy. Fame and Sorrow. César Birotteau. Lesser Bourgeoisie.
RASTIGNAC (Eugène de). Père Goriot. Great Man of the Provinces. Lucien de Rubempré. Last Incarnation of Vautrin. Rural Ball. Commission in Lunacy. Study of Woman. Another Study of Woman. Magic Skin. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Daughter of Eve. Historical Mystery. Nucingen and Co. Cousin Bette. Deputy of Arcis. Unconscious Comedians.
RUBEMPRÉ (Lucien de). Lost Illusions. Great Man of the Provinces. Lucien de Rubempré. Bureaucracy. Ursula.
SCHMUCKE (Wilhelm). Cousin Pons. Ursula. Daughter of Eve.
TAILLEFER (Frédéric). Père Goriot. Nucingen and Co. Magic Skin. The Red Inn.
TILLET (Ferdinand du). César Birotteau. Nucingen and Co. Lesser Bourgeoisie. Two Brothers. Pierrette. Lost Illusions. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Daughter of Eve. Deputy of Arcis. Cousin Bette. Unconscious Comedians.
TOUCHES (Mlle. des). Béatrix. Great Man of the Provinces. Another Study of Woman. Daughter of Eve.
TRAILLES (Maxime de). Père Goriot. César Birotteau. Gobseck. Ursula. Deputy of Arcis. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Cousin Bette. Béatrix. Unconscious Comedians.
VALOIS (Chevalier de). Chouans. Gallery of Antiquities. An Old Maid.
VANDENESSE (Félix de). Lily of the Valley. Great Man of the Provinces. César Birotteau. Memoirs of Two Young Married Women. Marriage Contract. Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan. Another Study of Woman. Historical Mystery. Daughter of Eve.
VIGNON (Claude). Great Man of the Provinces. Daughter of Eve. Béatrix. Cousin Bette. Unconscious Comedians.
PAULINE (de Villenoix). Louis Lambert. Drama on the Sea Shore. Vicar of Tours.

V.

TITLES OF AMERICAN TRANSLATIONS ¹

MADE BY KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY, AND PUBLISHED BY ROBERTS BROS., BOSTON, U. S. A. IN 40 VOLUMES, INCLUDING MEMOIR.

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE.

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE.

Volume.	English Name.	French Name.
I.	Preface. Père Goriot.	Le Père Goriot.
II.	Fame and Sorrow.*	La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote.
	Colonel Chabert.	Le Colonel Chabert.
	The Atheist's Mass.	La Messe de l'Athée.
	La Grande Bretèche.	La Grande Bretèche.
	The Purse.	La Bourse.
	La Grenadière.	La Grenadière.
III.	Modeste Mignon.	Modeste Mignon.
IV.	Albert Savarus.	Albert Savarus.
	Paz.	La Fausse Maîtresse.
	Madame Firmiani.	Madame Firmiani.
V.	Memoirs of Two Young Married Women.	Les Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées.
VI.	The Marriage Contract.	Le Contrat de Mariage.
	A Double Life.	La Double Famille.
	The Peace of a Home.	La Paix du Ménage.
VII.	A Daughter of Eve.	Une Fille d'Ève.
	A Commission in Lunacy.	L'Interdiction.
	The Rural Ball.	Le Bal de Sceaux.
VIII.	A Start in Life.	Un Début dans la vie.
	Vendetta.	La Vendetta.
	Study of Woman.	Étude de Femme.
	The Message.	Le Message.
IX.	Béatrix.	Béatrix.

¹ Those marked * are the original names given by Balzac.

SCENES FROM PROVINCIAL LIFE.

Volume.	English Name.	French Name.
X.	Eugénie Grandet.	Eugénie Grandet.
XI.	The Two Brothers.*	Le Ménage d'un Garçon.
XII.	The Lily of the Valley.	Le Lys dans la Vallée.
XIII.	Ursula.	Ursule Mirouët.
XIV.	Pierrette.	Pierrette.
	The Vicar of Tours.	Le Curé de Tours.
XV.	The Gallery of Antiquities.	Le Cabinet des Antiques.
	An Old Maid.	La Vieille Fille.
	The Illustrious Gaudissart.	L'Illustre Gaudissart.
XVI.	Lost Illusions.	Illusions Perdues.
XVII.	A Great Man of the Provinces in Paris.	“ “

SCENES FROM PARISIAN LIFE.

XVIII.	Lucien de Rubempré.	Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes.
XIX.	The Last Incarnation of Vautrin.	La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin.
	Nucingen and Co., Bankers.	La Maison Nucingen.
	Pierre Grassou.	Pierre Grassou.
XX.	Ferragus.	Ferragus.
	The Duchesse de Langeais.	La Duchesse de Langeais.
XXI.	César Birotteau.	César Birotteau.
XXII.	Bureaucracy.	Les Employés.
XXIII.	The Lesser Bourgeoisie.	Le Petit Bourgeois.
XXIV.	Gobseck.	Gobseck.
	The Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan.	Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan.
	Unconscious Comedians.	Comédiens sans le savoir.
	Another Study of Woman.	Autre Étude de Femme.
	Comedies played Gratis.*	Gaudissart II.
XXV.	Cousin Bette.	La Cousine Bette.
XXVI.	Cousin Pons.	Le Cousin Pons.

SCENES FROM MILITARY LIFE.

XXVII.	The Chouans.	Les Chouans.
	A Passion in the Desert.	Une Passion dans le désert.

SCENES FROM POLITICAL LIFE.

Volume.	English Name.	French Name.
XXVIII.	An Historical Mystery. An Episode under the Terror.	Une Ténébreuse Affaire. Un Épisode sous la Terreur.
XXIX.	The Brotherhood of Con- solation.* Z. Marcas.	L'Envers de l'Histoire con- temporaine. Z. Marcas.
XXX.	The Deputy of Arcis.	Le Député d'Arcis.

SCENES FROM COUNTRY LIFE.

XXXI.	The Country Doctor.	Le Médecin de Campagne.
XXXII.	The Village Rector.	Le Curé de Village.
XXXIII.	Sons of the Soil.	Les Paysans.

PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES.

XXXIV.	The Alkahest. The Hidden Masterpiece.	La Recherche de l'Absolu. Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu.
XXXV.	Catherine de' Medici.	Sur Cathérine de Médicis.
XXXVI.	Juana.* Adieu. The Recruit. El Verdugo. The Red Inn. A Drama on the Sea Shore. The Elixir of Life. The Hated Son. Maître Cornélius.	Les Marana. Adieu. Le Réquisitionnaire. El Verdugo. L'Auberge Rouge. Un Drame au Bord de la mer. L'Élixir de Longue Vie. L'Enfant Maudit. Maître Cornélius.
XXXVII.	The Magic Skin.	La Peau de Chagrin.
XXXVIII.	Louis Lambert. Facino Cane. Gambara. Melmoth Absolved.	Louis Lambert. Facino Cane. Gambara. Melmoth réconcilié.
XXXIX.	Séraphita. Jesus Christ in Flanders. The Exiles.	Séraphita. Jésus-Christ en Flandres. Les Proscrits.
XL.	Memoir of Honoré de Balzac.	

VI.

CLASSIFICATION.

WE have been asked so often to give an order or sequence in which Balzac should be read that we feel compelled to offer at least an opinion on this subject.

Balzac himself made the classification in which he desired his work to stand. He spent many years on the task of arranging it, and he gives his reasons for this order in his preface to the *Comedy of Human Life*, as follows:—

“It has been no light task to paint the two or three thousand salient figures of an epoch—for that is about the number of types presented by the generation of which this human comedy is the contemporary and the exponent. This number of figures, of characters, this multitude of portraits needed frames, permit me even to say galleries. Out of this necessity grew the classification of my work into Scenes—*Scenes from private, provincial, Parisian, political, military, and country life*. Under these heads I have classed all those studies of manners and morals which form the general history of Society and of its ‘conduct of life and noble deeds’ (*faits et gestes*), to use the language of our ancestors.

“These six divisions follow a general idea; each has its meaning and signification, and represents a distinct phase in human life. The ‘Scenes from private life’ are those of youth and adolescence, just as the ‘Scenes from provincial life’ represent the age of passions, calculations, self-interest, and ambition. The ‘Scenes from Parisian life’ draw the picture of tastes, fashions, sentiments, vices, and all those unbridled extravagances excited by the life of great cities, where the extremes of good and the extremes of evil meet together. Each of these three divisions has its local color. Paris and the provinces—that social antithesis—furnished the data. Not only men but events may be formulated by

types; and there are situations in the lives of all, typical phases, which I have sought out and studied carefully.

“After depicting these three sections of Society, I wished to show certain other phases of life which unite the interests of some or of all, and are yet partly aloof from the common order. Out of this desire came the ‘Scenes from political life’ also the ‘Scenes from military life.’ . . . Finally, the ‘Scenes from country life’ are, as it were, the evening of my long day’s work, if I may so call this social drama. In this division will be found my purest characters, also the application of the great principles of order, of patriotism, and of morality.

“Such is the structure, teeming with life, full of comedy and of tragedy, on which I base the ‘Philosophical Studies.’ In these I have shown the key-note of that vast assemblage of all that strikes the eye, that captivates the mind, or touches the heart. I have shown the havoc that has followed thought, step by step, from emotion to emotion.”

The above is the sequence in which all French editions and the present translated edition of the *Comédie Humaine* have been published.

If some minds find it necessary to read these books in an order of sequence, it is surely Balzac’s own arrangement which ought to be their guide. The Translator, however, desires to say that, while it is *essential* to read every volume of this work of the great writer (for he cannot otherwise be thoroughly understood), it is, in her opinion, more interesting, more attractive, and less monotonous to read the various volumes according to our own individual fancy. This is like entering a Society in which we soon come to know the component members; whom we lose sight of and meet again, among other surroundings, with all the variety and freshness of real life.

But, in consideration of the fact that some readers have asked for a fixed rule, the Translator gives the following as

her individual opinion and experience: (1) It is impossible to take any one character and follow the thread of it from volume to volume without tangling so many other threads that this form of sequence would probably be abandoned after the first attempt. Take the character of Rastignac, for instance, Balzac's leading *jeune premier*, who first appears in *Père Goriot*. To follow him consecutively to middle age through many volumes, would make it impossible to do the same for the equally important characters with whom he comes upon the scene. (2) To take the volumes in their mere chronological order will be found to have no object and no result. Certainly there was none such in Balzac's mind, because, up to the time of his death, he was constantly changing dates and even the names of personages to bring them into his own classification. (3) The only sequence (except Balzac's own) in which the Translator can see any practical meaning is that of periods; namely: the well known periods of French history, the Revolution, the Consulate, the Empire, the Restoration, and the July (Orléans) dynasty. This classification is, however, entirely apart from Balzac's purpose, and does not further his own literary and philosophical intentions. It is given here without authority and solely to meet a demand from some American readers.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE "COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE"
ACCORDING TO PERIODS OF FRENCH HISTORY.

THE REVOLUTION. 1789 to 1799.

	Vol.		Vol.
The Chouans	27	The Recruit	36
An Episode under the Terror .	28	The Red Inn	36

THE CONSULATE. 1799 to 1804.

La Vendetta	8
A Passion in the Desert	27

THE EMPIRE. 1804 to 1814.

	Vol.		Vol.
The Peace of a Home	6	Adieu	36
The Two Brothers	11	El Verdugo	36
An Historical Mystery	28	Louis Lambert	38
The Alkabeth	34	Séraphita	39
Juana	36		

THE RESTORATION. 1814 to 1830.

Fame and Sorrow	2	The Lily of the Valley	12
The Rural Ball	7	Pierrette	14
Memoirs of Two Young Married Women	5	The Vicar of Tours	14
Modeste Mignon	3	An Old Maid	15
The Purse	2	The Gallery of Antiquities	15
A Start in Life	8	Lost Illusions	16
Madame Firmiani	4	Great Man of the Provinces in Paris	17
A Double Life	6	Ferragus	20
Study of Woman	8	The Duchesse de Langeais	20
The Message	8	César Birotteau	21
La Grenadière	2	Lucien de Rubempré	18
Gobseck	24	Last Incarnation of Vautrin	19
Père Goriot	1	Facino Cane	38
Colonel Chabert	2	Bureaucracy	22
The Atheist's Mass	2	The Country Doctor	31
A Commission in Lunacy	7	Sons of the Soil	33
The Marriage Contract	6	The Magic Skin	37
Ursula	13	A Drama on the Sea Shore	36
Eugénie Grandet	10	La Grande Bretèche	2

THE JULY (*Orléans*) DYNASTY. 1830 and after.

Albert Savarus	4	Cousin Pons	26
Paz	4	Comedies played gratis	24
A Daughter of Eve	7	Unconscious Comedians	24
Béatrix	9	The Lesser Bourgeoisie	23
Another Study of Woman	24	Z. Marcas	29
The Illustrious Gaudissart	15	The Brotherhood of Consolation	29
Nucingen and Co., Bankers	19	The Deputy of Arcis	30
The Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan	24	The Village Rector	32
Pierre Grassou	19	Melmoth Absolved	38
Cousin Bette	25	Gambara	38

NOT INCLUDED IN THE ABOVE PERIODS.

	Vol.
A. D. 1308. The Exiles	39
“ “ 1479. Maître Cornélius	36
“ “ 1550. Catherine de' Medici	35
“ “ 1550. The Elixir of Life	36
“ “ 1591. The Hated Son	36
“ “ 1612. The Hidden Masterpiece	34

VII.

VINDICATION OF BALZAC.

A BOOK entitled “Un Roman d'Amour” has lately (1896) been published by Balzac's well-known bibliographer, the Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, and recommended to the world by the Publisher's Circular as follows: “‘Roman d'Amour’ is the history of Balzac's courtship of Madame de Hanska. While it is interesting as any fiction, it is absolutely true in every particular,—the author having drawn his romantic love picture from authentic sources until now inaccessible.”

The purpose of this book is to show, (1) that Balzac's connection with Madame Hanska was illicit from the first; (2) that he had several mistresses contemporaneously, whom he deceived about each other, and laughed over in a letter to his sister; (3) that his marriage during the two months it lasted after his return to Paris did not give him the happiness he had hoped for.

It is difficult to answer a whole book in the brief space of this appendix, and I request all readers who desire to rescue this great name from undeserved obloquy to obtain the book itself and compare it with the vindication that here follows, which can only be clearly understood in that way.

Before proceeding farther, I must state that Balzac's letters and papers in possession of M. de Lovenjoul, including those mentioned, or alluded to, in "Roman d'Amour," were offered to me for sale by M. de Lovenjoul early in 1889. He gave me an informal list of these papers; among them was the Hanska correspondence; and he particularly mentioned the letter of Oct. 12, 1833, to Madame Surville. He also stated in connection with that letter that no other evidence existed as to Balzac's illicit relations with "many married women." "A cloud of letters," he wrote me, "are still in existence, but they tell nothing; they are not the letters of women who had a part, either great or small, in his time or in his thoughts."

By the kind offices of Mr. E. C. Stedman, I conveyed this offer to the editor of Scribner's Magazine, as will be seen by the subjoined letter, and I was on the point of sending an agent from London to Brussels to examine the papers when M. de Lovenjoul withdrew the offer of the Hanska correspondence, on the ground that he found M. Calmann Lévy had a prior claim to it. As that was the part we chiefly desired, the negotiation fell through.

NEW YORK, July 31, 1896.

MY DEAR MISS WORMELEY, — I perfectly remember that in 1889 you informed me, through Mr. Stedman, of a proposal made to you by the Vicomte de Lovenjoul to sell the right to publish in this country the letters of Balzac in his possession, and that I expressed both to you and to Mr. Stedman much interest in the possible opportunity to examine them with a view to making some proposal concerning them for the Magazine. The matter came to nothing, because, as I remember, M. de Lovenjoul withdrew his offer, or some important part of it.

Yours sincerely,

E. L. BURLINGAME.

The references for what follows are to Madame Surville's memoir; Balzac, his life and works, from his Correspondence,

1 vol. Paris, 1856; Balzac's Correspondence contained in vol. xxiv., Édition Définitive of Balzac's Complete Works, Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1876; "Balzac," a Memoir, Wormeley, Roberts Brothers, Boston; "Un Roman d'Amour," Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1896.

Conjecture and insinuation made without offer of proof are difficult to *answer*; yet they are the chief basis of "Roman d'Amour." I shall take them consecutively, partly to show the reader their nature, partly to give such reply as that nature allows.

An effort is made (pp. 12, 23, 24) to show that Madame Hanska's first letter to Balzac was surreptitiously written in order not "to awaken the susceptibilities surrounding her." The context shows that this refers to her husband, for the rest of her family knew of the letter. "If our deductions do not deceive us," the letter was written by the governess of her daughter: "everything leads us to believe in this hypothesis. Still, it is possible that this first letter was written by a relative" living in the house. "Perhaps" (p. 28) this letter perished in 1847, in an *auto-da-fé* which Balzac made of all the letters he had received from Madame Hanska; or, perhaps, by dint of reading it he wore it out, and so involuntarily destroyed it. We know not."

The simple facts are that Madame Hanska wrote to Balzac, in February, 1832, a letter expressing her admiration of his writings. It was so far secret that she signed herself, "L'Étrangère," — Foreigner; but it was not surreptitious; it is mentioned again and again in the correspondence. The incognito was given up before September, 1833, at which time, Monsieur Hanski having brought his family to Switzerland early in the spring of that year, Balzac met Madame Hanska for the first time, by appointment at Neufchâtel. So far from Monsieur Hanski being ignorant of the correspondence, Balzac sends him messages in his letters to Madame Hanska, all of which, until after Monsieur

Hanski's death in 1842, bear the same unmistakable tone of *friendship* in which he addressed Madame Carraud and others. Monsieur Hanski himself writes thus to Balzac: "Accept my thanks for so precious a souvenir of your good friendship. My wife has no doubt told you how mystified I was. . . . Here my wife brings me your letter. . . . But, adieu, monsieur, my wife is doubtless writing you a long gossip." A part of Balzac's correspondence with Madame Hanska was burned in a fire which occurred at the Hanski house in Moscow. The letters of the first three years appear to have been destroyed at that time. (See vol. xxiv., Éd. Déf. p. 217.)

A story is made out of nothing (pp. 68-72) to prove the mystery of his visit to Neufchâtel. "Balzac knew not what means to employ to hide from all this journey to Neufchâtel. The deepest mystery was demanded of him, and he asked himself how he could, during the journey and at the post-inns, succeed in concealing his name and person, so well known to the public of that day. . . . But such obstacles could not stop a man of our hero's stamp, and his plan was soon made." The simple facts appear in his Correspondence (pp. 181-183, vol. xxiv., Éd. Déf.). Among his various schemes was one for making paper. His sister mentions it in her little memoir. Being told that he could obtain information concerning this paper at Bésançon, and Bésançon being a place where he could take the mail-coach to Neufchâtel, he writes to his friend Charles de Bernard, who lives in Bésançon, that he is coming down for a day on business about which he wishes to consult him, and he asks him to engage a place for him in the mail-coach for Neufchâtel on the following day. Nothing could be more simple or above-board. During the five days he is at Neufchâtel he writes to Madame Carraud.

"Roman d'Amour" gives two letters (pp. 33-49), which are alleged to be the second and third addressed by Madame Hanska to Balzac; but as it states that "neither the one nor

the other is in Madame Hanska's handwriting," it is unnecessary to notice them.

The foregoing will show that so far, "Roman d'Amour," instead of being, as advertised, "absolutely true in every particular," and "drawn from authentic sources," is made up of conjectures and insinuations without any offer of real evidence.

I now come to *proof*—almost the only proof given, or claimed to be given, in the volume. This demands serious examination. It is a letter written by Balzac to his sister, October, 1833 (pp. 76–88). It is prefaced by the following remarks:—

"Happily, a unique document, and exceptionally precious in relation to this first interview [that at Neufchâtel] is in our hands. It is precise, and fixes, from Balzac's own pen, his immediate impressions of Madame Hanska and the five days he spent near her. This document consists of an autograph letter, almost entirely unpublished, addressed to his sister Madame Surville; this letter is certainly the most important, which, until now has been brought to light on the opening of that celebrated passion. . . . Here is the complete text [*texte complet*] of this letter, certainly-written very rapidly, for we find several words omitted and more than one obscurity. To make the meaning clearer we have made, according to our custom in such cases, some additions [*adjonctions*] placed, as usual, between brackets."

[PARIS] Saturday, 12 [October, 1833].

MY DEAR SISTER, — You understand that I could not speak to you before Eugénie. But I had all my journey to relate to you.

I have found down there all that can flatter the thousand vanities of that animal called man, of whom the poet is certainly the vainest species. But what am I saying? vanity! No, there is nothing of all that. I am happy, very happy in thoughts, in all honor as yet. Alas! a damned husband never left us for one second during five days. He kept between the petticoat of his wife and my waistcoat. [Neufchâtel is] a little town where a woman, an illustrious

foreigner, cannot take a step without being seen. I was as it were in an oven. Constraint does not suit me.

The essential thing is that we are twenty-seven years old, beautiful to admiration; that we possess the handsomest black hair in the world, the soft, deliciously delicate skin of brunettes, that we have a love of a little hand, a heart of twenty-seven, naïve; [in short, she is] a true Madame de Lignolles, imprudent to the point of flinging herself upon my neck before all the world.

I don't speak to you of colossal wealth. What is that before a masterpiece of beauty, whom I can only compare to the Princess Belle-Joyeuse, but infinitely better? [She possesses] a lingering eye (*œil traînant*) which, when it meets, becomes of voluptuous splendor. I was intoxicated with love.

I don't know whom to tell this to; certainly it is not [possible] either *to her*, the great lady, the terrible marquise, who suspecting the journey, comes down from her pride, and intimates an order that I shall go to her at the Duc de F's [Fitz-James] [nor] is it [possible to tell it either] *to her*, poor, simple, delicious bourgeoisie, who is like Blanche d'Azay. I am a *father* — that's another secret I had to tell you — and, at the head of a pretty little person, the most naïve creature that ever was, fallen like a flower from heaven, who comes to me secretly, exacts no correspondence, and says: "Love me a year; I will love you all my life."

It is not [either] *to her*, the most treasured, who has more jealousy for me than a mother has for the milk she gives her child. She does not like *L'Étrangère* precisely because *L'Étrangère* appears to be the very thing for me.

And finally, it is not *to her* who wants her daily ration of love, and who, though voluptuous as a thousand cats, is neither graceful nor womanly. It is to you, my good sister, the former companion of my miseries and tears, that I wish to tell my joy, that it may die in the depths of your memory. Alas, I can't play the fop with any one, unless [apropos of] Madame de Castries, whom celebrity does not frighten. I do not wish to cause the slightest harm by my indiscretions. Therefore, burn my letter.

As it will be long before I see you, for I shall go, no doubt, to Normandy and Angoulême, and return to *see her* at Geneva, I had to write you this line to tell you I was happy at last. I am [joyous] as a child.

Mon Dieu, how beautiful the Val de Travers is, how ravishing the lake of Biemme. It was there, as you may imagine, that we sent the husband to attend to the breakfast; but we were in sight, and then, in the shadow of a tall oak, the first furtive kiss of love was given. Then as our husband is approaching the sixties, I swore to wait, and *she* to keep her hand, her heart for me.

Is n't it a pretty thing to have torn a husband — who looks to me like a tower — from the Ukraine to come eighteen hundred miles to meet a lover who has only come four hundred, the monster!¹

I'm joking; but knowing my affairs and my occupations here, my four hundred count as much as the eighteen hundred of my *fiancée*. She is really very satisfactory. She intends to be seriously ill at Geneva, which require [will require the care of] M. Dupuytren to soften the Russian ambassador and obtain a permit to come to Paris, for which she longs; where, for a woman, there's liberty on the mountain. However, I've enchanted the husband; and I shall try next year to get three months to myself. I shall go and see the Ukraine, and we have promised ourselves a magnificent and splendid journey in the Crimea; which is, they say, a thousand times more beautiful than Switzerland or Italy.

But what labor between now and then! Pay our debts! Increase our reputation!

Yesterday I went to Gérard's. Three German families — one Prussian, one from Frankfort, one from Vienna — were officially presented to me. They came faithfully to Gérard's for a month past to see me and tell me that nothing was talked of but me in their country [*chez eux*]; that amazing fame began for me on the frontier of France and that I had only to persevere for a year or two to be at the head of literary Europe, and replace Byron, Walter Scott, Goethe, Hoffmann!

Ma foi! as they were good Germans I let myself believe [all] that. It restored to me some courage, and I am going to fire a triple shot on the public and on the envious. During this fortnight, at one flash [I shall] finish "Eugénie Grandet," write the

¹ Balzac would not have written this to his sister, for they both must have known, he, certainly, that Monsieur Hanski hired the house in Neufchâtel early in the spring of 1833 and took his family there in May. Balzac was not invited, or, at any rate, did not go there till September 25th.

“Aventures d’une idée [heureuse]” and “Le Prêtre Catholique,” one of my finest subjects. Then will come the fine third *dizaine*, and after that I shall go and seek my reward at Geneva, after having paid a good slice of debts. There, sister. I have now resumed my winter life. I go to bed at six, with my dinner in my mouth, and I sleep till half-past twelve. At one o’clock Auguste brings me a cup of coffee, and I go at one flash, working from one in the morning till an hour after mid-day. At the end of twenty days, that makes a pretty amount of work!

Adieu, dearest sister. If your husband has arrived, tell him the “Aventures d’une idée [heureuse]” are on the ways, and he will perhaps read them at Montglat, for I will send you the paper in which they appear if you stay till the end of the month.

The affair of the “Études de Mœurs” is going on well. Thirty-three thousand francs of author’s rights will just stop all the big holes. I shall [then] only have to undertake the repayment to my mother, and after that, faith! I shall be at my ease.

Well, adieu, my dear sister. If you have any heart, you will answer me. What the devil are you doing at Montglat? However, you are free; that’s not reproach, it is curiosity. Between brother and sister it is allowable. Much tenderness. You won’t say again that I don’t write to you.

Apropos, the pain in my side continues; but I have such fear of leeches, cataplasms, and to be tied down in a way that I can’t finish what I have undertaken, that I put everything off. If it gets too bad we will see about it, I and the doctor, or magnetism.

Addio, addio. A thousand kind things. Correct carefully the “Médecin [de Campagne],” or rather tell me all the places you think bad, and *put the great pots into the little pots*; that is, if a thing can be said in one line instead of two, try to make the sentence.

Adieu, sister.

[HONORÉ.]

Here follows the same letter as it was given by Madame Surville herself in her memoir (pp. 139–141) published in 1856, six years after Balzac’s death, twenty years before the publication of his Correspondence—in which it appears identically the same (p. 176) except for the addition of a

last clause which is the same as in the above letter, — and forty years before its present appearance in “Roman d’Amour.”

Madame Surville gives the date of the letter as:—

October, 1833.

Gone; without a word of warning! The poor toiler went to your house to make you share a little joy, and found no sister! I torment you so often with my troubles that the least I can do is to write you this joy. You will not laugh at me, you will believe me, *you will!*

I went yesterday to Gérard’s; he presented me to three German families. I thought I was dreaming, three families! — no less! — one from Vienna, another from Frankfort, the third Prussian, but I don’t know from where.

They confided to me that they had come faithfully for a month to Gérard’s, in the hope of seeing me; and they let me know that beyond the frontier of France (dear, ungrateful country!) my reputation has begun. “Persevere in your labors,” they added, “and you will soon be at the head of literary Europe.” Europe! they said it, sister! Flattering families! — How I could make certain friends roar with laughter if I told them that. *Ma foi!* these were kind Germans, and I let myself believe they thought what they said; and, to tell the truth, I could have listened to them all night. Praise is so good for us artists, that that of the good Germans restored my courage; I departed quite gayly from Gérard’s, and I am going to fire three guns on the public and on envious folk, to wit: “Eugénie Grandet,” “Les Aventures d’une Idée heureuse,” which you know about, and “Le Prêtre Catholique,” one of my finest subjects.

The affair of the “*Études de Mœurs*” is well under way; thirty thousand francs of author’s rights in the reprints will stop up large holes. That slice of my debts paid, I shall go and seek my reward at Geneva. The horizon seems really brightening.

I have resumed my life of toil. I go to bed at six directly after dinner. The animal digests and sleeps till midnight. Auguste makes me a cup of coffee, with which the mind goes at one flow [or flash, *trait*] till mid-day. I rush to the printing-office to carry

my copy and get my proofs, which gives exercise to the animal, who dreams as he goes.

One can put a good deal of black on white in twelve hours, little sister, and after a month of such life there's not little labor accomplished. Poor pen! it must be made of diamond not to be worn out by such toil! To lift its master to reputation, according to the Germans, to pay his debts to all, and then to give him some day rest upon a mountain, — that is its task!

What the devil are you doing so late at M——? Tell me about it, and say with me that the Germans are worthy people. A fraternal hand-shake for Monsieur *Canal* [his nickname for her husband]; tell him that “*Les Aventures d'une Idée heureuse*” are on the ways.

I send you my proofs of the “*Médecin de Campagne*” to read.

I remark on these letters:—

1st. The original of the letter published in “*Roman d'Amour*” was not signed; the signature, Honoré, is added in brackets.

2nd. The purpose of writing the letter is given in both versions and in each it is totally different.

3rd. The letter given by Madame Surville bears all the marks of being genuine. It is a merry little tale about his Germans, quite spontaneous and characteristic, and it hangs well together.

4th. The letter in “*Roman d'Amour*” claims to be the “complete text.” How comes it, therefore, to have such variations from the original published by the sister who received it, and republished authoritatively in the *Édition Définitive*? Some one *must* have rewritten the letter. Who did? Not Balzac himself, certainly. Some hand has garbled the lively little tale. No other explanation is possible; for these variations are not omissions of passages, but the total reconstruction of many (and very characteristic) sentences.

5th. Now, if another person rewrote and garbled the letter, is it not a legitimate conclusion that the same hand

may have added the parts which now appear for the first time, and which are contrary to everything that we know of Balzac's nature, as shown in his life and writings, and in the statements of his nearest friends? In saying this, there is no intention of accusing M. de Lovenjoul of being privy to the fraud. If it is a fraud, he has simply been misled by the bibliographical mania; for bibliography becomes a mania in time like other forms and vanities of collection.

The same letter, published twenty years later in Balzac's Correspondence (vol. xxiv. Éd. Déf.), is identical with the Madame Surville version down to the words, "What the devil are you doing so late at M——?" After that it continues thus:—

After all, you are free, and that is not a reproach, it is curiosity; between brother and sister it can be pardoned.

Well, adieu; if you have any heart you will answer me. A fraternal handshake to M. Canal; tell him "Les Aventures d'une Idée heureuse," are on the ways, and he shall soon read them.

Addio! addio! Correct the "Médecin" well; point out to me all the passages you think bad, and *put the big pots in the little pots*; that is to say, if a thing can be said better in one line than two, try to make the sentence.

Now, it is observable that this letter published in 1876 was *not* taken from Madame Surville's printed narrative, because of the additions to it. It must, therefore, have been taken from the original letter from which Madame Surville's letter was also taken,—both versions corresponding so closely. It is also observable that the variations in the passages are simply additions in the version of 1876, and omissions in that of 1856,—there is no reconstruction of sentences. Take, for instance, the evidently genuine message, "A fraternal handshake to M. Canal" ("Poignée de main fraternelle à M. Canal," — Balzac's nickname for M. Surville, who was Royal engineer of Bridges and Roads). This passage

is the same in both the authentic letters ; but the version of 1896 reconstructs the passage thus : " If your husband has arrived, tell him that ' Les Aventures d'une Idée [heureuse]' are on the ways, and that he may read them, perhaps at Montglat," etc.

Some one has, therefore, rewritten this letter. The question who did so, and when, and why, is of no consequence to Balzac's memory.

With regard to the remarks in the " Roman d'Amour " letter about other mistresses, and the flippant, almost casual, remark that he is a father, and also to the comments made upon this subject (pp. 62, 63, 64, 92, 93), I have only to say, (1) that no supporting testimony is offered; (2) that Balzac is shown in a light which nothing that we know of him warrants; and which is contradictory of the evidence of the friends who were best able to judge of him, such as Théophile Gautier and George Sand (quoted in this Memoir, pp. 193, 201, 202, 210, 227, 228); (3) that M. de Lovenjoul stated to me that no evidence existed, except a letter to his sister, touching his " many intrigues with married women," and his natural children, of whom, " it was said," he had a number. The impression left on my mind by M. de L.'s letters to me (and it is confirmed by this volume) was that he thought Balzac's character gained by being placed in that light, and that he was anxious to save him from the charge of chastity. This seems strange; and yet it was the simple opinion forced upon me in 1889; which is now deepened.

So much by way of *answer*. There is a higher form of answer which, though it is not legal proof, will appeal, I think, to such minds as ought to judge of Balzac.

I now call Balzac himself to witness whether he ever felt and wrote about the women he loved and who loved him, as the letter in " Roman d'Amour " represents. The following quotations are from his Correspondence (vol. xxiv. Éd. Déf.).

To Madame Hanska (p. 473) 1846:—

“I bless you every day of my life, and I thank God for your good affection. You are my happiness as you are my fame and my future. Do you sometimes remember that morning at Valence on the bank of the Rhone, where our gentle talk triumphed over your neuralgia, and where we walked for two hours in the dawn, both ill, yet without noticing the cold or our sufferings? Believe me, such memories, which are wholly of the soul, are as powerful as the material recollections of others; for in you the soul is more beautiful than the corporeal beauties for which the sons of Adam destroy themselves.”

Did any man ever write that to a woman with whom he had lived in illicit intercourse, more or less frequent, for twelve years?

To the same (p. 456):—

“Those who know you as I do can aspire but to one thing beside you, and that is to comprehend, enjoy, and love your soul more and more, if only to become better by intercourse with you and your etherealized spirit. That is my prayer; the desire of my human religion.”

To the same (p. 399):—

“I entered a church to-day to pray and ask God for your health, with an ardor full of egotism,—as all fanaticisms are. I was afraid; I dared not pray. I said to myself, ‘This is so full of selfish interest perhaps I shall irritate Him.’ And I stopped suddenly, like a bigoted old woman, or a silly schoolgirl.”

To the same (p. 465):—

“I prayed for you and for your children fervently; for whenever I see an altar for the first time I take my flight to God, and I dare humbly and ardently implore his goodness to me and mine, which are you and yours.”

To the same (p. 466):—

“To-morrow, I am going to see a little house which is for sale near the church of Saint Vincent de Paul—the Byzan-

tine church we went to see, you remember, where a funeral was going on. You said to me, looking at the vacant ground near the church: 'I should not be unwilling to live here; we should be near to God and far from the world.'

To the same (p. 267):—

"I was very unhappy in my youth, but Madame de Berny made up for all by an absolute devotion which I never understood to its full extent until the grave had secured its prey. . . . I strive to perfect that which she sketched out in me."

Here is a letter to Madame Carrand written five days before the letter in "Roman d'Amour," Oct. 5, 1833 (p. 184), the day after his return from Neufchâtel. (Madame de Berny is evidently the person alluded to in that letter as being "jealous like a mother of her milk.") He is speaking of severe reviews of his work:—

"But I do not mind it much; you are my public,—you and a few choice souls whom I desire to please; but you, above all, whom I have never seen or listened to without gaining some good; you who have the courage to help me in pulling up the weeds in my garden; you who encourage me to perfect myself; you who resemble the angel to whom I owe all [Madame de Berny]. . . . On my return here yesterday I found her so ill that I was seized with a panic; my mind is full of anguish. Her life is so much to mine. Oh! no one can form a true idea of that deep affection which has sustained all my efforts and comforts all my pains. You know something of it, you who understand friendship so well."

To the same (p. 184), August, 1833:—

"You are right, dear noblesoul, in loving Madame de Berny. In each of you are striking resemblances of thought, the same love of the right, the same enlightened liberality, the same love of progress, same desires for the good of the masses, same elevation of soul and thought, same delicacy in your natures. And for that I love you much."

To the same (p. 192), Geneva, January, 1834:—

“I hope you know what the security of friendship is and that you will not say to me again: ‘Bear me in memory,’ for Madame Hanska says to me: ‘I am happy in knowing that you inspire such friendships; they justify mine for you.’”

To the same (p. 193):—

“But, dear, I can at least say this with the tenderest effusions of my heart; that on my long and painful way four noble beings have constantly held out their hands to me, encouraged, loved and pitied me.”

Those “four noble beings” were Madame de Berny, Madame Carraud, Madame Hanska, and probably one whom he lost in youth (see Théophile Gautier’s statement, p. 227 of this memoir). I now ask, did the man who wrote thus of those women write, within the same three months, the flippant, if not insulting, remarks about two of them in the “Roman d’Amour” letter? I need only ask the question, without comment of mine.

The last insinuation in the volume is perhaps the most cruel of all.

After relating a circumstance that was annoying (nothing more, for it related only to the loss of the key of the entrance gate), which happened on the evening Balzac and his wife arrived in Paris after their marriage, the book goes on:—

“This agitating incident, this drama in his own house, were, we must admit, distressing omens with which to begin the dual life so long desired by the great writer. Had he a presentiment, and did that thought have its influence on the months that followed? We are ignorant. But, if we may believe divers witnesses and friends wholly worthy of belief, he did not find in the conclusion of his long romance all the happiness he had hoped. Without speaking of the absolute silence Madame Surville keeps on this point in her volume”—(Madame Surville’s narrative does not come within ten years of his death)—“we learn (*nous tenons*) from several contemporaries that at the time of Balzac’s

death the union in the new home was already greatly changed (*l'union du nouveau ménage était déjà fort altérée*). This fact Victor Hugo states absolutely (*précise absolument*) in his posthumous volume, 'Choses Vues.' The account of the death in that volume is most painful, and most important as an authentic document recorded *de visu*:—

"The author of 'Hernani,' uneasy about the state of Balzac's health, goes to make inquiries. He is received by a servant woman, who answers in speaking of her master, 'He is lost. Madame has gone to her room.'"

Happily, "Choses Vues" is a printed volume to be found in every public library. The article is translated into this Memoir (pp. 345-48). As the whole charge rests upon the words, "Madame has gone to her room [*Madame est rentrée chez elle*]," I shall ask: Is the human body able to go through a scene such as that (with a dreadful detail which Victor Hugo does not spare us, but which I have spared my readers), a scene which had lasted two days and was to last twenty-four hours longer, without a moment's rest? Why should Madame de Balzac *not* have gone to her room? And yet that simple, natural, perhaps unavoidable act is adduced as proof (*précise absolument*) that a marriage which crowned so many years of love was already unhappy! If Victor Hugo, with his ardent temper and his passionate love of justice, had lived to this day, he would, I think, have taken steps to publicly denounce the interpretation thus placed upon his words.

Having spent the last twelve years in daily close communion with Balzac's work, and mind, and spirit, and being profoundly convinced of the cruel injustice done to them, I feel it my duty to defend his memory to the best of my ability.

KATHARINE P. WORMELEY.

THORN MOUNTAIN, JACKSON, N. H.

August, 1896.

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